

A Companion to Tacitus

Pagan, Victoria Emma

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A COMPANION TO
TACITUS
EDITED BY VICTORIA EMMA PAGÁN



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Abbreviations

Names of authors or works in square brackets [—] indicate spurious or questionable attributions.

General Abbreviations

ad; ad loc.

cf.

ch., chs.

ed., eds.

esp.

ff.

fr., fr.

mod.

MS, MSS

n.

no.

p., pp.

plut.

pref.

sc.

schol.

s.v.

trans.

Vat. Lat.

ad locum, at the line being discussed in the commentary

compare

chapter, chapters

editor(s), edited (by)

especially

and the following (lines, pages)

fragment, fragments

modified

manuscript, manuscripts

note

number

page, pages

pluteus, a desk in which manuscripts were stored

preface

scilicet, namely

scholia

sub verbo, under the word

translator, translated (by)

Vaticanus Latinus

Roman *Praenomina*

First names of male Roman citizens, relatively few and handed down in families, are abbreviated on inscriptions and conventionally in modern works of scholarship. The following occur in this volume:

A.

C.

Cn.

L.

M.

P.

Q.

Sex.

T.

Aulus

Gaius

Gnaeus

Lucius

Marcus

Publius

Quintus

Sextus

Titus

Greek Authors and Works

Dio
[Hippoc.]
Aer.
Homer
Il.
Od.
Hdt.
Isoc.
Pan.
Pl.
Phaed.
Plut.
Cato
Galba
Otho
Polybius
Hist.

Cassius Dio
Hippocrates
de Aera, Aquis, Locis

Iliad
Odyssey
Herodotus
Isocrates
Panegyricus
Plato
Phaedrus
Plutarch
Life of Cato the Younger
Life of Galba
Life of Otho

Historiae

Roman Authors and Works

Caes.
Ciu.
Gal.
Cato
Orig.
Cic.
Amic.
Att.
Brut.
de Orat.
Fam.
Fin.
Inu.
Leg.
Off.
Opt. Gen.
Orat.
Part.
Q. fr.
Sest.
Tusc.
Columella
Rust.
Dig.
Gel.
HA
Tacitus
Horace
Ars P.
Carm.
Sat.
Juv.
Sat.

Caesar
de Bello Ciuili
de Bello Gallico
Cato
Origines
Cicero
de Amicitia
Epistulae ad Atticum
Brutus
de Oratore
Epistulae ad Familiares
de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum
de Inuentione
de Legibus
de Officiis
de Optimo Genere Oratorum
Orator
Partitiones Oratoriae
Epistulae ad Quintum fratrem
pro Sestio
Tusculanae Disputationes
Columella
de Re Rustica
Digest
Aulus Gellius
Historia Augusta
Life of Tacitus
Horace
Ars Poetica
Carmina
Satires
Juvenal
Satires

Lucan
BC
Mart.
Mela
Ov.
Ars.
Tr.
Pers.
Plin.
Nat.
Plin.
Ep.
Pan.
Publilius (Syrus)
Sent.
Quint.
Inst.
RGDA
Rhet. Her.
Sal.
Cat.
Jug.
Hist.
SCPP or SCP
Sen.
Suas.
Sen.
Apocol.
Ben.
Breu.
Clem.
Dial.
Ep.
Marc.
Polyb.
Ira
Nat.
Pha.
Tranq.
[Sen.]
Oct.
Sil.
Pun.
Suet.
Aug.
Cal.
Claud.
Dom.
Galba
Iul.
Nero
Otho
Tib.
Vit.
Tac.
Ag.
Ann.
Dial.
Ger.

Lucan
Bellum Ciuile
Martial
Pomponius Mela
Ovid
Ars Amatoria
Tristia
Persius
Pliny the Elder
Naturalis Historia
Pliny the Younger
Epistulae
Panegyricus

Sententiae
Quintilian
Institutio Oratoria
Res Gestae Diui Augusti
Rhetorica ad Herennium
Sallust
de Coniuratione Catilinae
de Bello Jugurthino
Historiae
Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre
Seneca the Elder
Suasoriae
Seneca the Younger
Apocolocyntosis
de Beneficia
de Breuitate Vitae
de Clementia
Dialogi
Epistulae morales
Consolatio ad Marciam
Consolatio ad Polybium
de Ira
Naturales Quaestiones
Phaedra
de Tranquillitate
[Seneca the Younger]
Octavia
Silius Italicus
Punica
Suetonius
Diuius Augustus
Gaius Caligula
Diuius Claudius
Domitianus
Galba
Diuius Iulius
Nero
Otho
Tiberius
Vitellius
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Annals
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Hist.
Varro
Ling.
Vell.
Vergil
Aen.
Ecl.
G.
Vitr.

Histories

de Lingua Latina
Velleius Paterculus

Aeneid
Eclogues
Georgics
Vitruvius

Works of Secondary Scholarship

CIL
HRRel

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (1863–)
Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae, H. Peter,
ed.(1914)

ILS

Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, H. Dessau, ed.
(1892–1916)

OLD

Oxford Latin Dictionary, P. G. W. Glare, ed.
(1968–1982)

PIR

Prosopographia Imperii Romani Saeculi I, II, III,
1st ed., E. Klebs and H. Dessau, eds. (1897–
1888); 2nd ed., E. Groag, A. Stein, et al., eds.
(1933–)

TLL

Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (1900–)

Introduction

Victoria Emma Pagán

Res ipsa hortari uidetur ... supra repetere: “The very subject matter seems to urge me to look back” (Sal., *Cat.* 5.9). So Sallust, at a loss as exactly how to begin his account, says in his magisterial preface to the *Catilinarian Conspiracy*. He chooses to go back, albeit momentarily, to the founding of Rome: *urbem Romam* (*Cat.* 6.1). Of course, the vanishing horizon of Sallust’s first work turns out to be the inaugural words of Tacitus’ last (*urbem Romam*, *Ann.* 1.1.1). For Sallust, *urbs Roma* is a point of retreat at the start of a career; for Tacitus, the point of departure at the end. This companion is born of such a tension, between retreat and departure, the tradition of established scholarship and the innovation of groundbreaking discovery. This is not the first companion to Tacitus. While the contributions to this volume were being written, Tony Woodman’s *Cambridge Companion to Tacitus* was in production and published in 2009. That companion concludes with an essay by Mark Toher on “Tacitus’ Syme,” and so in a Tacitean move (that simultaneously betrays and flaunts the anxiety of influence), Syme’s *Tacitus* shall introduce this companion.

Toher provides a biographical sketch of Ronald Syme’s life in Oxford together with an assessment of his two colossal and most famous works, *The Roman Revolution* and *Tacitus*. Toher locates the impact of Syme’s influence on the study of Tacitus in a pervasive identity crisis:

It is fair to say that our understanding of Tacitus, who he was and why he wrote, is in significant part due to Syme’s own analysis of him; much that is generally accepted by scholars of Tacitus is due to *Tacitus*. The problem is then compounded by the fact that in *Tacitus* there is a fair amount of complementary and complimentary projection: the Tacitus that emerges from *Tacitus* has features that were characteristic of Syme himself.

(Toher 2009, 325)

It is often noted that Tacitus was of provincial origin and Syme was from New Zealand; the one lived among the learned aristocracy of Rome, the other of Oxford. On every page Syme adopts for himself the terse, pointed, sententious style of Tacitus (e.g., “Aufidius cannot compete.” “Small things, but significant.” 1958, 276, 389). Of course,

having thoroughly ingested Tacitus, Syme could not help but write like him; imitation was as much an occupational hazard for Syme as it was for Tacitus, who imitated his literary predecessor Sallust. Yet the sympathies run deeper than biographical coincidence or literary form.

Among its many purposes and achievements, Syme's *Tacitus* in two volumes is a thoroughgoing demonstration of the influence of contemporary events in Tacitus' own lifetime upon his writing. While the argument is orchestrated across hundreds of pages, it crystallizes here:

The early chapters of Book I [of the *Annals*] depict political behavior, pitilessly – the fraudulent protestations of loyal subjects, discreetly modulated between mourning and rejoicing, and the eager rush to voluntary enslavement. State ceremonial, public professions, and secret conflicts – the whole thing may seem to hint and foreshadow the accession of Hadrian.

(Syme 1958, 481)

Syme announces unequivocally the narrative principles governing the structure of Tacitus' *Annals*. We have come to call this kind of historical explanation "meta-history," and though the term was coined in 1854 (according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, third edition, April 2010; online version <http://www.oed.com.lp.hscl.ufl.edu/Entry/234359>, November 2010; accessed January 3, 2011), Hayden White redefined the term in 1973 with the seminal publication of *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. In the introduction, White describes the pervasive force of meta-history: "even the works of those historians and philosophers of history whose interests were manifestly nonpolitical, such as Burckhardt and Nietzsche, have specific ideological implications. These works, I maintain, are at least *consonant with* one or another of the ideological positions of the times in which they were written" (White 1973, 26–27). Just as the accession of Hadrian casts a palpable shadow across Tacitus' account of the reign of Tiberius, so *The Roman Revolution* bears the imprint of events in Europe from 1937 to 1939, when the work was composed. Although the method of "tropes" that White so carefully developed to explain the mechanics of meta-history begins to list when freighted with history's heaviest cargo, the Holocaust (White 1987, 76–80), nevertheless White succeeds in forcing an explicit recognition of this phenomenon to which all historians are subject. Such awareness of the cultural contexts of our own times unites these contributions under one cover and makes companions of us all.

Our understanding of the cultural contexts in which Tacitus wrote his five surviving works hinges on a chronology that is not always as accurate as we would like. The *Agricola* is a biography of Tacitus'

father-in-law who was governor of Britain; references to Nerva as still alive (Ag. 3.1) and then Trajan as *princeps* (Ag. 44.5) suggest the work was begun in 97 CE and completed in 98. A reference to the second consulship of Trajan in 98 (Ger. 37.2) is the only evidence for the date of the *Germania*, an ethnographic treatise on the Germani written on the heels of the biography. The *Dialogus de Oratoribus* was written some time between 98 and 103, an “uncomfortably wide” margin (Brink 1994, 275) that cannot be secured by internal reference. Its location in this volume indicates my allegiance to a later date. Thanks to the letters of Pliny on the eruption of Vesuvius (Ep. 6.16, 20), we know that Tacitus was working on the *Histories* in 106, and it is assumed that he finished this work before embarking on his last masterpiece, the *Annals*, the date of which hinges on an internal reference to the “Red Sea” (*rubrum mare*, Ann. 2.61.2). If this refers to the modern Red Sea, then a date after 106 is given; if the Persian Gulf is meant, then the date may be pushed as far forward as 117. It is generally accepted that the *Annals* were begun under Trajan but not completed until after the accession of Hadrian in 117 (Potter 1991; Rutledge 1998, 141–143). Of the death of Tacitus, no evidence obtains.

Similarly, the year and place of Tacitus’ birth are unknown; based on the dates of his public offices, it can be reasonably inferred that he was born in 56 or 57 CE. He would have been a teenager in 69, when the Roman world was ravaged by civil war. He refers to himself as a young man at the time of the dramatic date of the *Dialogus*, that is, in 75 (*iuuenis admodum audiui*, Dial. 1.2). Though not born in Rome he completed his education there. According to the *Agricola* (9.6) he married in 77. After a short period of military service as a tribune, he obtained the quaestorship in 81 or 82, which brought him membership to the Senate. The next step on the *cursus honorum* would have been the aedileship; he speaks of his praetorship and priesthood of the Fifteen in 88 CE (Ann. 11.11.1). Thus, his career continued uninterrupted through the early years of Domitian’s reign. It is likely that he was appointed a legionary legate; we know that he was absent from Rome when Agricola died in 93 and he had been abroad for four years (Ag. 45.5). He held the suffect consulship in the second half of 97 (Plin., Ep. 2.1.6), when a revolt by the praetorian guard essentially forced Nerva to adopt Trajan; in such a climate he embarked on his literary career. An inscription testifies to his proconsulship of Asia in 112/13 (see Birley 2000, 235–236). Mention of the “Red Sea” occurs so early in the *Annals* (2.61.2) as to suggest that the later books must have been composed after 117.

What this chronological sketch reveals in full force is that Tacitus did not retire to the library. His political career and his literary output

overlap, a fact which above all distinguishes him from other ancient historians. Thucydides was an exile, Polybius a hostage, Sallust a senatorial reject: respectable history, so it seems, comes from outsiders. As a corollary, questionable history emanates from the inside: Caesar, Velleius, Josephus. Therefore, Tacitus' success as a historian *and* a statesman unnerves the reader, especially since he was ushered into political life by Domitian. This quandary is the starting point for Dylan Sailor's groundbreaking study, *Writing and Empire in Tacitus*, which explores the relationship between Tacitus' literary career marked by "the pervasiveness and intensity of the sense of alienation his work radiates" (2008, 49) and a successful political career that implicates him in the very system he critiques. Tacitus is "proto-liberal" (Sailor 2008, 319) and repellingly imperialistic: "If we call his stance on the Principate 'alienated,' the right word for his relationship to the empire is 'implicated' " (Sailor 2008, 321). Or, in the words of the Renaissance historian Francesco Guicciardini: "Cornelius Tacitus is very good at teaching subjects how to live and act prudently, just as he teaches tyrants how to establish tyranny" (as cited by Burke 1969, 163). Tacitus achieves the alienation necessary to validate his work as a historian, while his participation in the imperial project lends his literary career the necessary credentials. As a result we cannot unhitch Guicciardini's maxim; we cannot choose our Tacitus. We certainly cannot ignore him, for to Tacitus we owe the bulk of our understanding of Roman Britain, the tribes of the Germani, the development of oratory, and the principate from the accession of Tiberius to the reign of Vespasian (with regrettable losses in the reigns of Caligula, Claudius, and Nero).

Within these narrative accounts of Roman history ranging from 14 to 93 CE, Tacitus takes a fair amount of chronological liberties. For example the *Annals* begins with the accession of Tiberius and would have ended most likely with the fall of Nero. However, the digression on the origin of law at *Annals* 3.25.2–3.28.2 allows Tacitus to comment on a number of events that predate the reign of Tiberius, while the digression on luxury at *Annals* 3.52–55 leads him beyond the reign of Nero to speak of Vespasian as chiefly responsible for frugal behavior (*praecipuus adstricti moris auctor Vespasianus*, 3.55.4). Of course, ancient historians had long since used digressions for chronological in- and ex-trusions; likewise, temporal displacement is the historian's prerogative. Yet until the discovery of the inscription of the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre* (Eck, Caballos, and Fernández 1996) in Spain in the late 1980s, we had limited understanding of Tacitus' method and purpose for displacement.

The trial of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso (*Ann.* 3.10–19) is the longest and most detailed narrative of a legal proceeding in the extant *Annals*.

Piso was indicted for treasonable tampering with the army in Syria and with the murder of Germanicus by poison (3.13.1–2). The Roman people eagerly awaited Piso's conviction, and when it appeared he might be acquitted, they threatened to riot. Piso was escorted home to ensure his safety. His wife Plancina was a co-defendant, but secured the protection of Livia (3.15.1). Disheartened by his wife's desertion and the indubitable outcome of the trial, Piso committed suicide. Tiberius acquitted his sons and deferred to Livia in the case of Plancina. Piso was convicted posthumously and the Senate voted offerings of thanks for the avenging of the death of Germanicus. Tacitus records the trial between the approach of the *Ludi Megaleses* (April 4–10) and the *ouatio* of Drusus (May 28); however, according to the inscription the *senatus consultum* was passed on December 10. Thus, Tacitus manipulates the chronological order of events to fit his narrative sequence (see the discussions in Woodman and Martin 1996, 67–77; Eck, Caballos, and Fernández 1996, 109–121; Talbert 1999 warns against privileging either Tacitus or the inscription). By lodging the trial of Piso and its aftermath at the beginning of Book 3, he is able to connect the story with the death of Germanicus and Piso's usurpation of Syria at the end of Book 2. This is but one example of the way Tacitus combines the science of history writing with the artistry of storytelling (see also Damon 1999). Of course, Tacitus is not the only historian to bend time to his purpose, but his extant writings treat time in such a way as to generate a unique matrix that affords us glimpses of moments in the history of imperial Rome like no other. Moreover, in Tacitus' treatment of time, especially in the pervasive comparisons of (degenerate) present to (honorable) past, his moralizing tone rings clear.

Complementing Tacitus' artistic manipulation of time is his refined sense of space and geography, again pressed into the service of morality. Rome is always at the forefront of his narratives, and always there is a dichotomy between capital and provinces, center and periphery. Yet Tacitus resists a one-to-one correspondence between the near and the far, the morally good and the morally reprehensible. Sometimes events in Rome are proper when compared to activities on the edges of the empire; sometimes Rome all but collapses because of its immorality. Sometimes when confronted with extreme circumstances at the edges of the empire, a Roman will fall short. Sometimes non-Romans, whether in their homelands or in the Senate house, are portrayed as morally upright. Instead of neat maps that indicate precisely where morality resides, Tacitus creates intricate patterns of space and time that convey his implicit moral value judgments. The result is a sort of echo-chamber: one can never be quite sure whether the opinions expressed are those of the times

narrated or those of Tacitus' own day.

Thus, the assessment of Tacitus as a "gigantic figure," in the words of R. G. Collingwood (1946, 38), still holds. His magisterial style is without peer. His history is inextricably bound with his philosophy of human nature. He is keen to portray the struggle between individual and society, perhaps most memorably characterized by the ever-troubled relationships between *princeps* and Senate, general and soldier, governor and provincials. His prose is haunted by an eerily familiar sense of survivor's guilt, his narratives are intricate, and his speeches a tour de force of rhetoric and meta-history. Although his expressions are terse, his implications ring clear, and his indictment of those who fall short of his exacting moral standards still seethes with the anger he so baldly abjured. By providing standard background information necessary for enhanced appreciation, the Blackwell *Companion to Tacitus* aims to give a broad introduction to the fundamentals of Tacitean studies. At the same time, however, the volume showcases new theoretical approaches that enrich our understanding of this complex author. The traditional and the innovative need not reconcile. Rather, in dialogue under one cover, the two can equip a new generation of scholars to examine for themselves the richness of Tacitean thought.

The volume is divided into five sections, although the divisions are somewhat artificial, for some essays can be lodged comfortably under more than one rubric and some are best read in pairs. If the essays are read in succession, a sort of story emerges, beginning with the early modern rediscovery of Tacitus, moving through his life and works, focusing on his engagement with the literature of his times, and culminating with theoretical approaches that extend our understanding of Tacitus beyond the boundaries of the discipline of history. In deliberate contrast to the *Cambridge Companion to Tacitus*, which devotes six of twenty-one chapters to the reception of Tacitus, this volume has no such section, although Charles Murgia, James Rives, Herbert Benario, and Daniel Kapust necessarily include key aspects of the early modern and twentieth-century reception of Tacitus in their chapters. Given the now well-established centrality of reception studies in Classics, we might reasonably expect an entire companion devoted to the Tacitean tradition (cf. Farrell and Putnam 2010, a volume devoted exclusively to the reception of the *Aeneid*).

Part I, "Texts," begins with the discovery of the manuscripts of Tacitus, which enables our study of the historian. *Annals* 1–6 (Books 5 and 6 incomplete) survive in a single manuscript, the so-called First Medicean, from which was produced the *editio princeps* of 1515. *Annals* 11–16 and *Histories* 1–5 (also with major lacunae) are transmitted in the so-called Second Medicean; the minor works derive

from a ninth-century manuscript. Murgia thus reviews the transmission of the Tacitean texts from antiquity to the present day. The next five essays introduce the works of Tacitus in what I take to be their order of composition. Sailor outlines the structure and content of the *Agricola* and discusses praise and blame, the critiques of empire and principate, the generic diversity of the *Agricola*, and its value as a historical source.

Rives argues for a unified reading of the *Germania*, whose ethnographic first part typically receives more attention because of its fascinating content and its construction of Roman identity, while the second half surveys the individual peoples across the Rhine and across the Danube. The first part may be fairly considered “a description of a genus and the second part as an enumeration of its species” (p. 53). Furthermore, though brief in comparison to the *Histories* or *Annals*, nevertheless the *Germania* does address politics, especially in its response to Caesar’s *Gallic War*. While Tacitus’ purpose in writing the *Germania* may not be recoverable, the purpose to which this slender treatise was put, especially in early twentieth-century Europe, bears witness to the consequences of reception.

While Sailor and Rives acknowledge the value of the *Agricola* and *Germania* as sources for ancient history, Steven Rutledge takes the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* foremost as a source for social and cultural history of imperial Rome. This shift in focus disarms the contradictions inherent in the dialogue that have occupied scholarship and instead allows us to appreciate the wide range of opinions about the place of rhetoric in elite life, all of which are validated by their very inclusion in the tapestry of the dialogue: complexity is everything.

Jonathan Master leads the reader through an introduction to the *Histories* with keen attention to Tacitus’ style. Because only Books 1–5 survive, we are left with fewer than two of the twenty-eight years originally treated, two of the most tumultuous years in Roman history. As a result, the *Histories* has been a rich source for civil war, mutiny, and the collapse of military power (e.g., Ash 1999; Manolaraki 2003); however, Master opens up new avenues of inquiry with his attention to ethnic identity and the tensions among provincials that civil war undoubtedly raised.

Part I closes with the essay by Herbert Benario, who puts the *Annals* in the context of Tacitus’ career and earlier works and follows the story of the Julio-Claudians with particular attention to the theme of dissimulation that suffuses *Annals* 1–6. From the reign of Nero, Benario selects the memorable accounts of the assassination of Agrippina the Younger and the persecution of the Christians as exemplary of Tacitus’ narrative artistry. His essay ends with a survey

of Tacitus' popularity through the ages.

In the three essays of Part II, "Historiography," we learn how Tacitus used sources, engaged with other historians, and managed to explain the causes and effects of history in spite of the epistemological dilemma that the principate created. David Potter shows how Tacitus was constrained by his sources and by his audience or, rather, how author and audience were implicated in the process of historical analysis: the sort of history Tacitus wrote – the history of the governing class and its power – "could become very personal very fast" (p. 126). This is best demonstrated not in Tacitus' sources *per se*, but in his evaluation and use of sources. By summary, aggregation, suppression, and supplementation, Tacitus can bring the whole tradition of Roman historiography to bear on his particular presentation of history to the audience of his day. This audience, Arthur Pomeroy reminds us, would have been intimately familiar with the traditions of Roman historiography and its various sub-genres and topoi. In his plays with the annalistic form and his evident engagement with the narrative patterns of Livy, Tacitus asserted his *auctoritas* ("clout") and *fides* ("reliability") and thereby competed in the arena of Roman historiography. Our portrait of Tacitus' method of writing history is rounded out by Olivier Devillers, who takes as his starting point the epistemological difficulty posed by a political system that vests all power in one man, such that information is monopolized by one and therefore less accessible to the historian who seeks to explain events. A close reading of *Histories* 1.1–49 reveals the persuasive methods that Tacitus deploys in response to the gaps in information caused by the concentration of power. It is a commonplace in the scholarship that historiography changed markedly from republic to principate; however, Devillers analyzes precisely the effect this change had on Tacitus' writing.

Part III, "Interpretations," demonstrates the broad scope of possibilities open to the reader of Tacitus. Like Rutledge, Christopher van den Berg appreciates the social and cultural history evident in the *Dialogus* and sets aside the internal contradictions to explore instead the concept of deliberative oratory in theory – and its practice in the *Annals*. The *Dialogus* thus becomes central to our understanding of the rest of Tacitus' corpus, so much of which is oratorical.

The next two essays explore specific aspects of the *Histories*. Kathryn Williams examines three passages on senatorial embassies to rebellious legions that expose the shifting political and military dynamics of the empire and new imperial diplomatic procedures. Furthermore, in these passages Tacitus reinforces his judgments on senators, Stoic philosophers, and the generals in play. Rebecca Edwards argues that Tacitus makes allusions throughout the *Histories*

to acts suggestive of *deuotio*, a religious ritual in which an expiatory sacrifice averts disaster; however, the *deuotiones* of Galba and Otho do not achieve their intended effect. Instead, the disease that ravages Rome requires a *remedium* which, according to Tacitus, only Vespasian can provide.

The essays by Barbara Levick and Holly Haynes (situated squarely in the middle of this volume) tackle the concept of truth and all of its thorny implications. Levick is sensitive to the obstacles that Tacitus faced when writing the history of the Tiberian principate: the difficulties as well as the opportunities “lay in interpreting literary and documentary material in the clouded atmosphere of an inefficient despotism constructed on the base of a rivalrous, unscrupulous, and voluble aristocracy” (p. 266). Tacitus struggled for truth, and when it could not be obtained, he signaled the impasse to his reader. For Haynes, history and historiography are inextricable. The truth in the *Annals* resides not so much in the stories of the degeneracy of the *princeps* as in the language that reinforces such degeneracy. Tacitus’ writing demands that the reader be honest about his attitude toward power. Much of the unease generated in the *Annals* derives from readers’ attempts to dissimulate complicity in the formulation and maintenance of power, to pretend that they would behave differently if confronted with a tyrannical *princeps*. Levick and Haynes show, in their radically different ways, that neither Tacitus nor the reader can hide from the necessity of truth.

Certain characters dominate the *Annals* – Tiberius, Germanicus, Nero – but Seneca the Younger is especially fascinating because so much of his literary corpus survives. Rather than measure the Tacitean portrait against Senecan self-fashioning, James Ker explores the speeches and letters of Seneca that do not survive but are written into the *Annals* by Tacitus, who records not so much the content as the perceptions of and reactions to Seneca’s writing. Ker concludes his sophisticated analysis: “Tacitus, then, puts the reader in a position to assemble the narrative of Seneca as a complicated elite actor in the history of the early principate and more particularly as someone whose writings influenced Tacitean style and were an integral part of the actions of Seneca which Tacitus commemorates” (p. 327). This conclusion about Seneca as writer leads to deeper investigation of intertextuality in Tacitus.

Throughout his career Woodman “has consistently sought to illuminate the meaning of historiographical texts by studying their intertextuality and intratextuality” (Kraus, Marincola, and Pelling 2010, 4). In *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* published in 1998, Stephen Hinds maps a hitherto uncharted spectrum of intertextuality ranging from the precisely formulated

“fundamentalist” allusion to the “zone of zero-interpretability,” in which allusions are so vague as to be impossible to interpret. The next year (1999) was a watershed. David Levene and Damien Nelis hosted the conference that would result in the 2002 publication of *Clio and the Poets: Augustan Poetry and the Traditions of Ancient Historiography*, a collection of essays that address the interactions of poetry and history writing. The essays of Part IV, “Intertextuality,” reflect the impact of Woodman’s approach and the profound changes wrought in the scholarship by these two momentous publications at the end of the twentieth century. Christopher Krebs leads the discussion by proposing that an expression in the *Agricola* is a pointed allusion to the opening sentence of Sallust’s *Catilinarian Conspiracy* that more generally reveals Tacitus’ assimilation of a formative thought found in the speech of Lepidus (*Hist.* 1.55). The next four essays explore intertextuality more generally. Like Ker who reevaluates the Tacitean Seneca, Christopher Whitton forces us to reconsider the standard interpretation of an inferior Pliny riding the coat-tails of the superior Tacitus and questions the degree to which Tacitus may have been a willing associate of Pliny. Whitton argues that Tacitus reciprocated Pliny’s call to collaboration; the two men may have held similar attitudes toward the principate, though expressed in different ways.

The next three essays explore Tacitus and the poets. Beyond quantitative analysis (and the numbers are impressive: Schmaus 1887 posited nearly 500 Vergilian correspondences in Tacitus), Timothy Joseph examines representative passages of Tacitus that approximate the language, form, or “sympathy” of epic poetry and Vergil and Lucan in particular. Eleni Manolaraki and Antony Augoustakis focus specifically on the influence of Silius Italicus on the portrait of Germanicus. Catherine Keane masterfully elucidates the extent of engagement between Tacitus and Juvenal; although Juvenal clearly draws on Tacitus, he does not simply convert history to satire. The process is creative and dynamic, and the result is an adaptation that “changed the look of Roman satire itself” (p. 425). By bringing to light the range of allusions in and to Tacitus, from the obvious to the vague, the contributors in Part IV document the influences on, and the influences of, Tacitus across Latin literature, thereby proving the hermeneutic value of allusion.

The essays of Part V are more interdisciplinary and are intended to engage scholars beyond Classics. Thomas Späth analyzes contradictory paradigms of masculinity in Tacitus through the critical theoretical lenses developed by Joan Scott, Judith Butler, and Michel Foucault. Our understanding of masculinity in Tacitus is complemented by Kristina Milnor’s perceptive observations on female domesticity and the increasing force that women’s domestic roles exerted on imperial

politics. The contributions by Späth and Milnor will therefore be of interest to scholars of gender and women's studies. Nancy Shumate deftly deploys postcolonial theory so as to expose latent ideologies that underpin Tacitus' conception of Roman identity; it is in this broader intellectual context that Jonathan Master's essay and continued research on ethnicity in the *Histories* resonate all the more fully. For the resonances of Tacitus across the ages, Daniel Kapust brings a political theorist's eye to the study of Tacitus; he traces the strands of Tacitean thought that have shaped European intellectual history and offers an interpretation of his own: his portrait of a balanced, even-handed Tacitus brings suitable closure to the volume.

Yet after twenty-four essays there is no doubt that, in the words of Syme, "There is work to be done" (1968, 145). *Res ipsa hortari uidetur ... supra repetere* is the scholar's manifesto, and it is the sincere hope that the very subject matter of the contributions in this volume will urge readers to further research.

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PART I: Texts

1

The Textual Transmission

Charles E. Murgia

1. Annals 1–6

The textual transmission of the *Annals* and *Histories*, to the extent that they survive at all, is relatively simple since the archetypes (the source of all transmitted readings) survive, and these codices have been published in facsimile editions. *Annals* 1–6 (except for a lacuna covering most of Book 5 and the beginning of Book 6) survive in Florence as Laurentianus Mediceus plut. 68.1 (that is, the first codex chained to Bench 68 in the Library in the cloister of the church of St. Lawrence – the beautiful Basilica di San Lorenzo). This codex was written in the mid-ninth century in Caroline minuscules, probably in Fulda (so Bischoff 1998; facsimile with preface by Rostagno 1902). The fact that the preposition *apud* is regularly written *aput* attests to transmission in a Germanic-speaking region, where final *d* was pronounced as *t*. Although the correspondence of Poggio shows an attempt to acquire the codex from the monastery at Corvey, it was not until the sixteenth century that Pope Leo X gained possession and handed it over to Beroaldus (Filippo Beroaldo), whose text was used for the first edition (1515).

2. Annals 11–16, Histories

Annals 11–16 and *Histories* 1–5 are preserved in a mid-eleventh-century MS written in the Beneventan script of Monte Cassino. It is

also currently housed in the Medicean Library in Florence, catalogued as Laurentianus Mediceus plut. 68.2 (facsimile with preface by Rostagno 1902). It is bound under the same number with a somewhat later Beneventan MS, through which survive Apuleius' *Apology* (titled "On Magic"), *Metamorphoses*, and *Florida*. A librarian's note on the verso of the opening flyleaf indicates that the codex (including the Apuleius) had passed from the estate of Niccolò Niccoli (died 1437) to the monastery of San Marco in Florence. Letters between Poggio and Niccoli confirm his role in the humanists' discovery of Tacitus. The two Medicean MSS of Tacitus are reported by editors under the symbol (siglum) M. They are the sole sources of transmitted scribal readings of Tacitus (except for quotations of Tacitus by other authors), though at one time an effort was made to establish a later MS, L (whose watermark indicates a date no earlier than 1475, later than the first printed edition of these works, de Spira, Venice, 1472–1473) as having access to a line of transmission independent of the Second Medicean MS. Despite the efforts of Mendell (Mendell and Ives 1951) and Koestermann (1969), most editors now recognize that L, Leiden B. P. L. 16B, copied by Rudolphus Agricola (Roelf Heysman), simply exhibits the ingenuity of fifteenth-century humanists, including Agricola. It is useful for its conjectural corrections of the text as are other fifteenth-century codices, whichever is the earliest to divine a correction of a mildly corrupt text. But they are generally helpless against major errors such as lacunae. M's text ceases (before the end of the page) at *Histories* 5.26.3 *Flavianus in Pan<no>nia*. All the fifteenth-century codices stop either there or at an earlier passage. Editors such as Wellesley (1989) classify the later MSS (over thirty) according to the place where their text stops. Class 1 stops exactly where M stops, Class 2 (which includes Leiden B. P. L. 16B, and its probable main source, the first printed edition) stops substantially earlier at 5.23.2 *potiorem*, and Class 3 even earlier at 5.13.1 *euenerant*. Further details and bibliography are available in Tarrant (1983). Although the fifteenth-century MSS lack authority where M is extant, some at least must be invoked where M has suffered loss after the first copies of it were made, as in *Histories* 1.69 *placa|bilem*–75.2 *incertum* and 1.86.2 *inopia*–2.2.2 *Cyprum*, where M has suffered the loss of a bifolium. Useful MSS for this purpose include (from Class 1) Vat. Lat. 1958 (which Tarrant described as copied at Genoa in 1449 by Giovanni Andrea de'Bussi) and Laur. Med. plut. 68.5.

3. The Minor Works

Agricola

For the minor works, we again have available the archetype, but only one quire of the original ninth-century MS survives entire, containing *Agricola* 13.1 *munia* to 40.2 *missum*. Some readings of the *Agricola* survive in palimpsest after 40.2, but for the most part, for both the beginning and end of the *Agricola*, the ninth-century original was replaced by a fifteenth-century scribe identified by Annibaldi (1907) as Stefano Guarnieri. Guarnieri also added following the *Agricola* the text of the *Germania*. This MS (which also has bound with it, in front of the *Agricola*, the *Trojan War* of Dictys of Crete) used to be known as the codex Aesinas (Jesi lat. 8), preserved by the Count of Jesi, who successfully hid it from a Nazi attempt to seize it in 1944 (details in Schama 1995, 75–81). After a sojourn in Florence, where some folia were damaged in the flooding of the Arno in 1966 (Schama 1995, 81 and n. 15; Niutta 1996, 178), the codex was acquired in 1994 by the Biblioteca Nazionale in Rome, where it is catalogued as Cod. Vitt. Em. 1631. A full description is given by Niutta (1996), who reports that the codex must have passed from the estate of the Guarnieri family to the Balleani of Jesi in 1793. Its importance was recognized in 1902, and a printed diplomatic copy of the *Agricola* and perceptive analysis were published by Annibaldi in 1907. Till published a photographic facsimile in 1943, and photos of the entire codex, including the Dictys, are also housed in the paleography room (Widener D) at Harvard University. Annibaldi recognized that the ninth-century text of the *Agricola* corresponded to an inventory known from letters of Niccolò Niccoli (1431) and Decembrio (1455) of a MS found by a Hersfeld monk that contained in order the *Germania*, *Agricola*, *Dialogus* of Tacitus, and the *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* of Suetonius. This codex is commonly referred to as the Hersfeldensis (Hersfeld codex): the ninth-century writing of Aesinas lat. 8 is given the siglum E by Ogilvie in his Oxford Classical Text and is distinguished from e, the fifteenth-century writing. Doubts about the identification of the Hersfeld codex with E for the *Agricola* (based on the lack of mention of the Dictys text in the inventories) have been answered in Murgia and Rodgers (1984). The text of the *Agricola* was copied in the fifteenth century by scribes of two codices, A (Vat. Lat. 3429, written by Pomponio Leto) and T (Toledo 49.2, dated to 1474). Since these scribes copied the codex after it had been supplemented and corrected by Guarnieri, their testimony has no evidential value, but they need to be cited a few times for their conjectural emendations. The same is true of B, Vat. Lat. 4498, a copy of A (see Murgia 1977, 323–326).

The advantage of having extant a quire of the ninth-century MS that transmits the *Minor Works* is that we do not have to guess at what

it was like. We can see that it was liberally corrected by a different ninth-century hand, evidently from a different scribal source, since many of the readings added as variants in the margins would seem to a scribe to be improbable. Murgia (1977, 329) counted “at least 145 notable corrections and variants” in the *Agricola* text. Therefore when MSS of the *Germania* (whose fifteenth-century history followed a different path from the *Agricola*) display marginal variants, we can recognize that they thereby show a closer affinity to the archetype.

Germania

Although when Guarnieri supplemented the text of E he used E itself as his source, he did not use the Hersfeld codex as his immediate source for his text of the *Germania*. Guarnieri’s text, given by Winterbottom (1975) the siglum E, is placed by Winterbottom in the same family with an equal witness, codex, B: that is, based on shared errors, Winterbottom sees E and B as separated from the archetype by at least one shared MS (a hyparchetype). I could easily believe that even more hyparchetypes intervene, but the process of developing a stemma of the scribal relations is complicated by the fact that the archetype is known to have had corrections and marginal variants. Whenever two MSS share errors one must eliminate the possibility that the archetype had both the error and the correct reading or the codices must share the same choices too often for coincidence. Winterbottom narrowed the witnesses worth citing to six, comprising three families: W and m he combined as the family ζ; E (Guarnieri) and B he combined in the family β; and C he combined with a family Φ into the family Γ. W is Vienna s. n. 2960 (copied in 1466 by Hugo Haemste), m is Munich Clm 5307, B is Vat. Lat. 1862, C is Vat. Lat. 1518. The chief representative of Φ is Q (Venice Marcianus Lat. 4266, copied in 1464 in Bologna). Each of the three groups he presented as descending independently from the (now lost) Hersfeldensis, and he proposed to make the agreement of any two families usually establish the correct reading. This does not work in a tradition in which the archetype is known to have had variants. So in a reading such as *Germania* 2.2.9 (the third number is the line number in Winterbottom’s OCT), where Winterbottom printed the *Hermiones* of βC, but ζ correctly attests *Herminones*, the more likely explanation is that the archetype had *hermiones* in the text and *herminones* as a marginal variant, just as in *Agricola* 14.1, E had *cogidumnus* in the text, but the correct (and less Latin-looking) *togidumnus* as a marginal variant. The fact that βC share the same incorrect variant is compatible with two explanations: either they share a common hyparchetype or they share a preference for the *facilior lectio* (the

easier reading – Hermione being a familiar name in mythology; see Murgia 1977, 340).

Dialogus

Winterbottom used many of the same codices for the *Dialogus* as for the *Germania*. But W is now called V, and it joins with Vatican Ottobonianus Lat. 1455 (instead of m) to form ζ. B now stands alone as the representative of β. The relationships of the codices are clearer in the *Dialogus* in as much as the transmission is inferior. In the *Dialogus* the fact that there are fewer double readings presented as variants, but a number of apparent conflations of variants, makes it likely that the MSS all descend from a Renaissance apograph of the Hersfeld codex which either suppressed or conflated inherited variants. Some of the shared errors suppose fifteenth-century abbreviations. So 31.7.13 *comitem* Vahlen *citem* (with line over i) B *ciuitatem* Γζ shows the shared mistaking of *citem* (with line over c, Caroline abbreviation for *comitem*) for *citem* (with line over i, Renaissance abbreviation of *ciuitatem*). The Renaissance abbreviation for forms of *ille* (*i* followed by superscript *e*, or appropriate termination, such as superscript *a* for *illa* or *d* for *illud*) is frequently expanded as *iste* or *id* or *iam* by B and/or Γ, and once (41.5.13) all the MSS seem to have corrupted *illi* to *isti*. In 21.4.23, where the correct reading is ζ's *illae*, BC have *regulae*, and Q reads *re* followed by a space of three letters. It is clear that a common source of BCQ had *r* followed by superscript *e* (a Renaissance abbreviation of *regulae*), a mistake for *i* with superscript *e* (Renaissance abbreviation for *illae*). So we have here shared errors that cannot be attributed to marginal variants in the ninth-century Hersfeldensis, since those abbreviations are not known before the fifteenth century. We have to assume at least two Renaissance MSS anteceding BCQ, one of which correctly abbreviated *illae* with *i* and superscript *e*, and a second of which misread the *i* as an *r*. Other shared errors, such as at 11.1.21 *parantem* inquit Walther *parant enim quid* (*quidem* V) ζ *parant quid enim* BΓ (which show BΓ sharing a failed conjecture, where ζ more accurately transmits an unintelligible corruption), suggest that the most likely stemma makes BΓ share a common source (hyparchetype) of which ζ is independent. This was the view of Robinson (1935) on the *Germania* (where, though the independent value of ζ is clear, the argument is less secure), and Winterbottom (1983, 411) came to concede that Robinson may have been right.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

E. A. Lowe (early name Loew) did early paleographic work on the MSS of the *Annals* and *Histories* which may conveniently be found collected in his *Paleographical Papers* (Lowe 1972 Vol. 1: 92–98, 113 n. 3, 289–302 and plates 37–38), as well as in his *The Beneventan Script* (1980, 34: 43). For the *Minor Works* the main authority is Bischoff. Although it has often been assumed that the *Hersfeldensis* was written in Fulda (near Hersfeld, and where M for the *Annals* 1–6 was written), Bischoff, on paleographic grounds, thought that a monastery on the Loire was the more likely origin of the codex Aesinas.

Oliver (1951) tried to reconstruct a rustic capital archetype of a thirty-book edition of the *Annals* and *Histories* together. The words *Ab excessu diui Augusti* (“From the death of divine Augustus”), which the First Medicean MS has prefixed to each of the first five books of the *Annals* (the beginning of six does not survive), and which Mendell (1957, 295) interpreted as “the title of the MS,” is written as if part of the text and is interpreted by Oliver as a subtitle for the *Annals* within the thirty-book collection. But it should be noted that although the Second Medicean MS presents part of a collected edition of *Annals* and *Histories* together, it does not contain the alleged subtitle, and it contains within itself clear indication that it was copied from codices in which the *Annals* were bound separately from the *Histories*: although *Histories* 2–5 are titled (in colophons ending books in M) Books 18–21 of Tacitus (the end of *Histories* 1 and beginning of *Histories* 2 do not survive in M, but the colophon *Cornelii Taciti liber XVII explicit. Incipit XVIII*, “Cornelius Tacitus’ Book 17 ends. Book 18 begins,” found in later MSS, fits the pattern of the other book endings), the first book of the *Histories* begins in M without title on a recto (right-hand page) preceded by a blank verso (left-hand page, with the surviving bit of the end of the *Annals* on the other side). That indicates that the Second Medicean MS was copied from codices in which the end of the *Annals* ended the volume (and so was subject to losses, as often happens at the end of volumes) and the *Histories* began a new codex. So the binding together of *Annals* and *Histories* did not (in its line of transmission) antedate the eleventh-century Second Medicean MS, and, if a thirty-book edition is its source, it was a two-volume or multi-volume edition. The main reason for believing in a Late Antique thirty-book edition of Tacitus is a reference in Jerome, *Commentary on Zacchariah* 14.1.2, to Tacitus as composing the *Lives of the Caesars* “after Augustus all the way to the death of Domitian” in thirty volumes (*triginta uoluminibus*). But there is no secure proof that either Medicean MS descends from such an edition.

Oliver (1976) argued that Boccaccio, in his marginal addition to

his *De genealogia deorum*, attributed to Tacitus a story about an attack by Venus on king Cinyras (*cinaras*) which is based on a corrupt version of Tacitus *Histories* 2.3 that is found in L and other late MSS of all three classes. That Boccaccio knew the version as early as 1371 is interesting, but since it contains no correct readings relative to M, but further corrupts M's readings by failed conjectures, there is no basis for arguing that its text was independent of codex M.

Although Mendell's arguments for L's independence cannot be accepted, he did important work on the identification, description, and classification of the later MSS (1939 and 1957), and with Pol (1966) he published a facsimile of L. The most thorough arguments against independent value in L are provided by Goodyear (1965 and 1970). Römer's 1976 edition of *Annals* 15–16 provides a complete apparatus from which the quality and deficiencies of the later MSS can be judged. An insert after page LXVIII presents his stemma of the MSS in descent from M.

While Gordan provides very readable English translations of the correspondence of Poggio and Niccolò relative to the Renaissance discovery of Tacitus, her translations are based on the Latin texts published by Tonelli. The Latin texts of Poggio and Niccolò that concern the *Minor Works* may also conveniently be found in Robinson (2–7), as well as a letter of Panormita (3) and a note of Decembrio to Guarino of Verona (8–9). Schaps (32) brought into play also a letter of Jacopo, Poggio's son, which largely duplicates information contained in Niccolò's inventory. Schaps presented the chief reasons for doubting that the codex Aesinas was to be identified with the Hersfeldensis.

Winterbottom's arguments for a tripartite stemma for the *Dialogus* and *Germania* are presented most fully in 1972 and 1975. But Kaster (1992, 1–34) argued convincingly that Suetonius' *De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus* (which followed the *Minor Works* in the Hersfeldensis) descends through the same bipartite stemma that Robinson constructed for the *Germania* and Murgia for the *Dialogus*. Murgia (1979), in arguing for a relatively short lacuna in the *Dialogus* (a single folio after chapter 35), adds further comments on the quality of evidence of the MSS and on the early history of the transmission.

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The Agricola

Dylan Sailor

In 98 CE, Tacitus published his first known work, *On the Life of Cn. Julius Agricola* (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 1–11, 86), a biography of his father-in-law. This piece, thirty or so pages long in print, illuminates a range of questions: the biography of its subject; the biography and literary career of its author; the political and cultural conditions of the new regime of Nerva and Trajan; and the history of the genre of biography, of the Flavian era, of Roman Britain, and of Roman thought about their empire. To appreciate *Agricola*, it will first be necessary to consider Agricola himself and the moment of the work's publication, which was a significant one in Tacitus' life and in Roman political history. After that, we will move on to a series of discussions that will help us deal with central issues in *Agricola*: an overview of its structure and content, an analysis of the roles of praise and blame in the work, an examination of its interest in Rome's empire and of its analogy between the empire and the principate, an account of its stylistic and generic properties, and some remarks on its value as a historical source.

1. Background

Cn. Julius Agricola was born in 40 CE at Forum Julii (modern Fréjus, in the south of France) to a family of senatorial rank. He enjoyed a successful political career under Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, and was notable above all for his long (77–84 CE: Birley 2005, 77–78) governorship of the province of Britannia as the legate of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian in succession. In that office he greatly extended Roman control of Britain, conquering territory far into the area of Scotland. In 84 he was recalled; he never held office again and died at Rome in 93 (Ag. 44.1). His link to Tacitus had been forged in 76 or

77, when Tacitus and Agricola's daughter were married (Campbell 1986).

On September 18, 96 CE, after fifteen years in power, Domitian was assassinated in a palace conspiracy (Jones 1992, 93–96; Grainger 2003, 1–27). The Senate responded with enthusiasm and imposed sanctions on his memory: his images were destroyed or defaced, his name was obliterated from inscriptions, and he was denounced as a cruel and avaricious tyrant (Flower 2006, 234–262). In his place the conspirators installed the senator M. Cocceius Nerva. There followed a poorly attested but much discussed course of events (Syme 1958, 1–18; Griffin 2000b, 84–96; Eck 2002; Grainger 2003, 28–108). As Nerva was aged, infirm, and childless, his need to designate a successor would have been acute. The situation was unstable for other reasons, too. Some who had suffered under Domitian or whose relatives or friends he had killed, and doubtless some to whom it seemed timely to distance themselves from the old regime, cried out for vengeance against those they marked as the old regime's collaborators. Furthermore, elements of the army remained loyal to Domitian's memory, and there was danger that civil war would break out as it had in 69 CE after Nero's fall. To strengthen his grip, in October 97 Nerva turned to the man he had recently appointed as governor of Upper Germany, M. Ulpius Traianus (Trajan); he adopted him as his son, elevated him to the status of co-emperor, and designated him heir and successor. In January 98 Nerva died, and Trajan alone held the reins.

Nerva and Trajan portrayed themselves and life under their leadership as diametrical opposites to Domitian and his Rome (Griffin 2000b, 84–96, 102–108). This meant enshrining as negative as possible a memory of Domitian and presenting the new atmosphere as a total departure from it. Where Domitian had treated Romans as his slaves, Nerva and Trajan lived among them as fellow citizens; where Domitian had been secretive and cunning, they were open and ingenuous; where Domitian's initiatives had brought defeat and disgrace, Trajan would restore pride and victory. The literature of the era elaborated and reinforced this story: the late work of Martial, the speeches of Dio Chrysostom, the letters and "Thanksgiving Speech" of the younger Pliny, the *Satires* of Juvenal, and Tacitus' *Agricola* all remember Domitian as a tyrant and expressly or through implication prefer the new era.

When Domitian was killed in 96, he had probably already designated Tacitus as a suffect consul for the following year; Nerva did not alter this arrangement, and Tacitus held office (Syme 1958, 70). It was the culminating magistracy in the career of a man who had built his reputation as an advocate and had been honored repeatedly by

Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian: in 88, he had been praetor and by then was also a member of a prestigious board of priests (Tac., *Hist.* 1.1.3; *Ann.* 11.11.1). Of his duties as consul, we know one item: he had delivered the funeral oration for an eminent consular (Plin., *Ep.* 1.2.6).

Not every man of the elite had survived Domitian's rule, the later years of which were marked by executions and relegations of prominent citizens and philosophers (Jones 1992, 180–192; Griffin 2000a, 65–69). Examining one group of the men punished, the nature of their offenses, and their popularity will help us understand *Agricola*. In 93 CE the younger Helvidius Herennius Senecio, and Arulenus Rusticus were convicted of treason and executed: Helvidius was supposed to have alluded critically to Domitian in a play he had composed, and Herennius and Arulenus had each written a work in praise of a man who had been killed by a previous emperor; these latter works were destroyed when their authors were (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 132, 134). Herennius had written about the younger Helvidius' father, the elder Helvidius Priscus, who under Vespasian had insisted provocatively on senatorial privileges and had been put to death (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 133–134). Arulenus for his part had celebrated the father-in-law of the elder Helvidius, Thrasea Paetus, who had withdrawn from public life in protest against Nero's tyranny and had a few years later been compelled to commit suicide (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 132–133). Thrasea in turn had once written a *Life* of the younger Cato (Plut., *Cato* 37.1), the unbending Stoic who had preferred suicide to accepting Julius Caesar's clemency. Linked by personal connections, similar conduct, allegiance declared through the medium of biography, and finally a commitment to Stoic philosophy, this group of men, whom we will call “the martyrs,” constituted a tradition of self-sacrifice in defense of the dignity and privileges of the senatorial order. After Domitian's fall, his victims enjoyed great popularity, as did their predecessors. One man, Titinius Capito, composed “Deaths of Famous Men,” evidently recounting the final hours of some of the martyrs; another, C. Fannius, wrote three books on Nero's victims (Plin., *Ep.* 8.12.4, 5.5.3). The younger Pliny, too, was eager to advertise his own solidarity and ties with those who had died under Domitian (cf., e.g., *Ep.* 1.5, 3.11, 7.33, 8.12, 9.13).

It is into this broader cultural environment – of condemnation of Domitian, of praise of Nerva and Trajan, and of sympathy for and admiration of the martyrs – that *Agricola* emerged.

2. Structure and Content

Agricola may be divided into three unequal sections: a preface (1–3), a narrative of Agricola's life (4–43), and an epilogue (44–46). The narrative in turn can be analyzed like this: Agricola's life from birth to his appointment to the governorship of Britain (4–9); an ethnographical excursus on Britain (10–12) continued by a capsule history of the Roman conquest and administration of the island (13–17); a year-by-year account of Agricola's governorship (18–39); and a report of his return from Britain, life at Rome, and death (40–43). As the narrative of his life occupies by far the better part of the work and as the material relevant to his governorship of Britain fills most of that narrative, so too within the record of the governorship the account of the seventh and final season (29–39) consumes about as much space as those of the previous six together. The rendering of this last season features a detailed account of the Battle of Mons Graupius (29.2–38.2), complete with speeches of exhortation delivered by a Caledonian chieftain named Calgacus (30–32) and by Agricola (33.2–34).

3. Praise and Blame

Agricola is a work of praise and blame and also a work about praise and blame. To take up the former statement first: both explicitly and implicitly *Agricola* imagines its own task as the proper management of reputations. From the beginning its apparent purpose is to praise and preserve the memory of Agricola's virtues and exploits. At key moments it also extols Nerva and Trajan for having reversed the conditions of Domitian's rule and provided the circumstances under which it was possible to write *Agricola* (3, 44.5). Complementing this encomiastic function is a derogatory one: Domitian is the clear villain of the work, and the picture of him is everywhere ugly (2–3, 7.2, 39–43, 44.5–45.2). In these senses *Agricola* is a work of its moment: it praises the new regime in the terms in which it wished to be praised and attacks Domitian's memory in the spirit of the sanctions that had been decreed against it by the Senate.

In addition to praising individuals, *Agricola* also endorses and deprecates modes of life. In a notable passage Tacitus distills from Agricola's conduct a lesson for the reader:

But Domitian's nature, easily moved to anger and as hard to fathom as it was to call back, was nonetheless calmed by Agricola's moderation and foresight, because he did not seek to draw to himself fame and fate by behaving defiantly or making empty boasts of freedom. There are those who always marvel

when someone has done something forbidden; I would have them know that in fact it is possible for there to be great men even under bad emperors, and that deference and restraint, if combined with diligence and energy, receive as much praise as very many have gotten by pursuing a course over dangerous terrain and becoming famous through an ostentatious death that advanced the interests of the commonwealth not a bit.

(Ag. 42.3–4)

Here Tacitus criticizes the behavior of the martyrs: in this formulation, by flaunting their disapproval of the emperor and bringing down on their heads the regime's violence, they had given up their lives to win fame, without regard for the interests of their fellow citizens. Agricola provides an alternative model, one Tacitus supports: a man who keeps his head low, carries out the tasks the emperor assigns him, and benefits the larger community of Romans (although it is not spelled out here, it is clear enough that Agricola is imagined to have benefited Romans chiefly by subjecting much of Britain to their empire).

In endorsing the "Agricola" model, however, and questioning the motives and achievements of the martyrs, Tacitus makes of *Agricola* a work of praise in another sense, too. For under Domitian there had been many who, like Agricola, had shunned the martyr's path, who had prospered and taken honors from the emperor's hand, but who, after the assassination, suffered by comparison with those who had stood up to the tyrant and lost their lives. Enthusiastic collaborators had the most explaining to do, but those who had simply enjoyed the regime's approval and support still found themselves in an uncomfortable spot. Applauding Agricola's way, then, also lent dignity and value to the lives of many members of the political class who had survived Domitian. Tacitus himself is clearly one figure whose reputation could be helped, but so were the new emperors: Nerva and Trajan had been senators under Domitian, had supported him, and had been honored by him with a consulship. For Agricola, for Domitian, for Tacitus, and for Nerva and Trajan, then, *Agricola* advances a verdict on their lives and on their place in the new order of things.

I have also proposed that *Agricola* is a work about praise and blame. By this I mean that in addition to assigning praise and blame to individuals and categories, the biography also advances an argument about the terms and role of reputation in the post-Domitianic era and, more broadly, under the principate.

The preface distinguishes a past era, when virtuous people got the recognition they deserved, from a present one that is hostile to virtue

and wishes to punish and ignore it (Ag. 1). What makes the difference between those eras is the social and political character of the principate. If we view the matter historically, any given emperor had an interest in ensuring that he was more prominent than everyone else, and that glory, especially for military achievements, was laid at his door. From an early point in Augustus' principate, we see developing a set of *de facto* limitations on traditional elite display: triumphs and ovations quickly became the exclusive preserve of the imperial household, as did dedication of public monuments in the city of Rome (Eck 1984). These limitations endured. Generals who conquered new territories did so as agents of the emperor, and the credit was supposed to belong to him. Individual emperors could, however, be more or less concerned about rivals for glory: Trajan, for example, is praised by Pliny for giving credit to successful generals, while others, like Tiberius and Nero, are accused by our sources of jealously seeking to limit the renown of other Romans. In Tacitus' account, Domitian's treatment of Agricola puts him into the latter category. According to Tacitus, Agricola's conquests stirred fear and jealousy in the emperor (Ag. 39); he was therefore recalled from Britain and returned to Rome, where he was received with little ceremony (40.3) and commenced a life of retirement in order to rouse Domitian no further (40.4, 42.3); even this may not have sufficed in the end, however, since Agricola died under suspicious circumstances (43). It is chiefly in this sense, in *Agricola*, that the rule of Domitian was a time "hostile to virtues" (1.4); furthermore, given that it was inherent to the system that an emperor required the lion's share of glory, we may also regard the entire principate as a period that, from the perspective of *Agricola*, is always potentially "hostile to virtues," requiring only the accession of a bad emperor for that hostility to be activated.

In *Agricola* Tacitus does not simply lament the injustice of an emperor suppressing, restraining, or punishing the prominence attained by an Agricola. His presentation also intimates that the atmosphere created by jealous emperors imperils Rome's empire. One concrete instance is Domitian's removal of Agricola from Britain and his implied reluctance to recall him to duty as his own military enterprises fail (41.2–3). There is also a more diffuse threat. Tacitus reports that as a young officer Agricola conceived his "desire for military glory" (5.3) when he saw his general win glory by suppressing a revolt. This desire is what set him on the path of a military career; its fruit is the conquest of Britain. "Military glory" (*militaris gloria*), however, is also precisely what Domitian fears Agricola will monopolize (39.2). Thus, Agricola's initial ambition led to the public benefit of the conquest of Britain but was also destined

to incur the hostility of any jealous emperor, who would then take measures to harm him and suppress the glory he had sought and attained. Naturally, this outcome stood to lessen the appeal of spending one's life pursuing military glory. Had that life seemed less attractive to Agricola, he might not have chosen it, or he might have been a less aggressive general, content merely to hold the frontier; if it were to seem unappealing to all of the young men of the Roman elite, the fuel of military expansion would be spent.

From the perspective of *Agricola*, then, the political form of the principate, because it can produce emperors hostile to the glory of their fellow Romans, makes it dangerous to be praised for conquest and so perversely attaches disincentives to the performance of a public good; at the same time, however, autocracy had fostered the development of a new avenue to glory – the path of the martyr. This path had nothing to do with subjecting new peoples to Rome; rather, as we have seen, it depended on courageous individual self-assertion and on demonstrated allegiance to an ideology of senatorial liberty and dignity. As we saw above, prominent among Tacitus' criticisms of the martyrs is his contention that they got their fame by deaths that "advanced the interests of the commonwealth not a bit" (42.4). Unlike Agricola, then, who was insufficiently praised in proportion to his merits, the martyrs receive far more praise than they deserve; this in turn means that there are large incentives for others to imitate their fruitless behavior. Indeed in the narrative of Agricola's boyhood we see a suggestion of competition between these avenues to glory: before discovering military glory, Agricola had been entranced by the fame of the philosophical life, but had been held back from it by his mother (4.3) or, in other words, saved by her from joining the ranks of other Roman elites who had taken philosophy too seriously: Cato, Thrasea, Helvidius, and the rest.

In this sense, then, *Agricola* is not only a work of praise and blame but also a work about them: it outlines how they function under the principate and what is wrong with how they are distributed. A further effect of Tacitus' advancing this broader thesis is to endow *Agricola* with weightier consequences than it would otherwise bear: when he gives Agricola the praise he earned and Domitian and the martyrs the blame they merited, he is not merely praising or blaming those individuals and categories, but also correcting a vicious and unsound system of assigning value.

4. Empire and Principate

Narrating Agricola's life gives Tacitus the opportunity to examine and reflect on the two great structures of power that defined contemporary Rome: the empire and the principate. The former is a relationship between Romans and others, the latter a relationship between Romans and other Romans. While in *Agricola* Tacitus distinguishes meaningfully between the two – and indeed his *Germania* and *Dialogue on Orators*, published shortly after *Agricola*, may be said to deal only with the former and the latter, respectively – he is eager to explore how they are interrelated and challenges us to examine how far they resemble each other. We have already seen that Rome's empire is central to the work's agenda: Agricola's conquests are the grounds for his glory, desire to monopolize credit for conquest is what motivates Domitian's treatment of Agricola, and the threat jealous emperors pose to the health and security of the empire is a chief reason for despising them. In this section, after setting out in brief scope how fundamental the empire is to the work's content, we will consider two passages in which Tacitus brings to the fore questions about good and bad ways of conquering, pacifying, and administering provinces and about the legitimacy of Rome's empire, and finally we will turn to the ways in which at the work's end Tacitus draws an analogy between Rome's empire and the principate.

Agricola is altogether shaped by the empire, and his life is distinguished by it. Born in a citizen colony in Gallia Narbonensis, he was educated in the Greek city of Massilia (Marseilles), served as a junior officer in Britain, as a quaestor in Asia, as a legionary legate in Britain, as governor of Aquitania, and again as governor of Britain. The majority of *Agricola*, then, describes Agricola's conduct and achievements against a broad geographical backdrop as an agent of Rome's power. In addition, the ethnographical excursus on Britain conveys knowledge about a place and a group of peoples that were then being absorbed or remained to be absorbed into the empire. To that excursus Tacitus appends an account of that ongoing absorption, from Julius Caesar down to Agricola. Even after Agricola's governorship, the empire looms large: we learn that Domitian had recently celebrated a triumph for fictitious victories in Germania (39.1), that after reverses in "Moesia and Dacia and Germania and Pannonia" the mob asked for Agricola to be returned to duty (41.2–3), and that Domitian forced Agricola to ask to be excused from the lottery for the proconsulship of Africa or Asia (42.1–2). The empire goes unmentioned only in the preface and epilogue, where Tacitus offers no details about the nature of Agricola's achievement. Nearly all of *Agricola*, then, is about or touches in a significant way on Rome's empire.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Tacitus' representation of

the empire in the work – and thematically the most important to understand – is his interest in a set of interrelated endeavors: exploring good and bad kinds of administration, observing the effects of imperial power on subject peoples, and outlining a rationale for Rome's imperial sway. We can deal most effectively with this feature of his representation by examining two famous passages. In one (Ag. 21), Tacitus reports a winter in which Agricola encouraged Romanization in occupied Britain; in the other (Ag. 30–32), he puts in the mouth of a Caledonian chieftain an energetic and eloquent denunciation of the empire.

First, Romanization. Between Agricola's second and third seasons, Tacitus reports:

The following winter was spent in the execution of highly salutary designs. For, in order that a people that was uncultivated, widely dispersed, and therefore easily brought to war might become accustomed through pleasures to peace and inactivity, he encouraged them on an individual basis, and helped them with public resources, to build temple sanctuaries and market squares and houses, praising those who were quick to do so and chastising those who were sluggish: in this way, competition for prestige took the place of compulsion. He even instructed the children of the nobility in the liberal arts and said he ranked the Britons' talents above the efforts of the Gauls, to the degree that a people who but a short while before had refused the Roman language now desired to be eloquent in it. Then prestige became attached to dressing like us, and there were togas everywhere; and little by little there was a general going astray towards the enticements of vice – colonnades, bathhouses, and the refinements of the banquet. Among those who knew no better this was termed "being civilized," although really it was part of their servitude.

(Ag. 21)

This passage has disturbed some interpreters because it shows Agricola deliberately setting in motion events that he expects to issue in the moral corruption of Britons: "in order that a people ... might become accustomed through pleasures ... [Agricola] encouraged ... and ... helped." It is important to observe, however, that Tacitus expressly endorses his aims and methods: they are "highly salutary designs." How to make sense of his approbation? The answer lies in an unstated set of premises about the nature of the empire that this passage relies on. Agricola's policies here aim at a concrete goal, the pacification ("peace and inactivity") of occupied Britain. Pacification is in turn desirable because the alternative is worse: war ("a people ...

easily brought to war”). To spell out what this passage assumes, then: setting the Britons on a path from which they will deviate into vice and decadence is good policy because otherwise Romans and Britons will fight recurring wars.

Years later Tacitus would put into the mouth of a Roman general addressing rebellious Gauls the argument that the empire, though imperfect, nonetheless contained the chaos and violence that would otherwise erupt (*Hist.* 4.73–74). That logic is already present in *Agricola* 21: the collapse of the Britons’ morality and their embrace of servitude are not desirable in any absolute sense and in an ideal world might be unnecessary but, in the ugly world we inhabit, are a distasteful but preferable alternative to endless strife. This perspective also helps us make sense of the speech of the Caledonian chieftain Calgacus, to which we may now turn.

Before the account of the Battle of Mons Graupius, Calgacus and *Agricola* each give a speech, reported in direct discourse, to their respective armies. The burden of Calgacus’ speech (30–32) may be paraphrased like this: Romans’ conquests have always been driven by astonishing greed and desire to dominate; they administer their provinces in that same spirit, abusing their subjects for their own advantage and treating them like slaves; their fair language about their power is a cover for what is really crime and devastation (“using false terms they call plunder, murder, and rape ‘empire’ and where they make a wasteland they call it ‘peace,’” 30.5); because the empire is nothing but a crime, its subjects obey only out of fear. Therefore, in the impending battle the non-Roman auxiliaries in the Roman army will take the opportunity to desert when they see free Caledonians standing up to the Romans; the Caledonians will win the battle; and Caledonia will thus not only have beaten the Romans but will have set in motion their complete expulsion from the island.

What is the point of Tacitus’ admitting this critique to his work, and how are we to assess its claims? It must first be said that the speech is beyond question Tacitus’ composition, and so any effort to explain its content by appeal to Calgacus is no help (indeed, the delivery of a speech by a Caledonian chieftain and the figure of Calgacus himself are possibly invented details as well). From one perspective Calgacus’ critique is remarkable. The portrait he paints is not the image that Romans of the early principate seem to have presented to themselves: in its ideal conception, the empire kept chaos at bay for provincials as well as Romans, brought civilization to savage peoples, dealt fairly with independent peoples, and required contributions from the provinces to support the arms that kept the peace, not to satisfy their own greed (cf., e.g., *Plin.*, *Nat.* 3.39). Yet it is also a sort of critique that Romans sometimes put in the mouths of

foreigners they wrote about in their books. The frequency with which these sentiments appear in Roman authors suggests that they were not felt to expose any inherent injustice in the notion of Rome's imperial rule, and indeed this suspicion is corroborated when we look at individual instances. For example, in the historian Sallust's work, the Pontic king Mithridates and Sallust himself appear to agree that rampant greed and corruption infect Rome's administration of its empire. Yet where Mithridates insists that these features have always been part of the empire (*Hist. fr.* 4.69 Maurenbrecher), Sallust makes it clear that he himself thinks they are adventitious, identifying a historical moment when Rome's "rule, which was once supremely just and excellent, became vicious and unbearable" (Sal., *Cat.* 10.6). If with the king we regard the rot as inherent to the system, we can only feel that the empire is unjust and view its extirpation as the appropriate solution. If we follow Sallust, however, things look rather different: the problem is not the empire itself, which used to be good, but the degenerate Romans who have recently administered it and made it bad. The "policy implication" of that understanding would not be that the empire should be done away with, but that the Romans who run it should behave better than they have done recently. Thus, in Sallust at least, the literary device of the foreigner who levels persuasive charges against Rome's empire serves as a critique not of the idea of an empire but of the moral sickness of contemporary Romans.

We might then look at Tacitus' Calgacus from this perspective as well. Like Mithridates, the Caledonian chieftain condemns Rome's empire without qualification: it is only and always a criminal endeavor. But just as Mithridates' complaints resemble Sallust's but diverge in a decisive particular, so does Calgacus' picture lack crucial details that Tacitus supplies elsewhere in *Agricola*. It will be helpful to look at two of these. First, while Tacitus acknowledges that Roman administrators can be greedy and abusive, his work celebrates an administrator who is not greedy or abusive and who disables the abusive practices instituted under his predecessors (Braund 1996, 168): this strongly indicates that, *pace* Calgacus, the injustices done by imperial officials are incidental, not essential, to the empire's nature and that an empire administered by upright and self-controlled men can be just. Second, in reassuring his fellow Caledonians that the auxiliaries they are to face that day will desert their Roman masters, he proclaims that "the other Germans will desert [the Romans] in the same way the Usipi have done just recently" (Ag. 32.3). The episode he means has been related in absorbing detail by Tacitus only a few chapters earlier (28). Conscripts from the German tribe of the Usipi had been brought to Britain, killed the Roman officers who had been

training them, and fled in a few ships. Lacking their own resources, they began raiding the possessions of Britons (who resisted) and eventually turned of necessity to cannibalism. In this way some survived and reached German lands, where they were intercepted by other German tribes; of these some were sold into slavery, and what happened to the others Tacitus does not say. Now, to support Calgacus' immediate point that Germans might be willing to revolt, the Usipi are an excellent example. What the chieftain does not see – and what we do – is that the Usipi are a terrible example for his larger point: that driving off Rome's empire is better than enduring it. For whatever hope of safety the Usipi had had, they lost when they threw off their preceptors: without them, the world is one of universal depredation, and there is no solidarity between Usipi and Britons, or Usipi and other Germans, or indeed between Usipi and Usipi (cf. Evans 2003, 270–271). Above I suggested that lying behind Tacitus' endorsement of those policies of Agricola that led to the corruption of Romanized Britons was an outlook according to which the empire is the sole force preventing the world from falling into a kind of Hobbesian state of nature and so is presumed to be just and desirable. When Calgacus brings up the Usipi, we are once again confronted by this vision, at an inconvenient moment for his case: the freedom he seeks is the freedom to take your chances in a den of wolves.

So, while viewed in isolation his speech is a rousing condemnation of Roman abuse, its context within *Agricola* shows us what is wrong with it. First, even if Roman administrators commonly abuse subject populations, Agricola's example confirms that it is possible for a governor to conduct himself in a just and self-controlled manner – or, in other words, that it is possible to have empire without injustice. Second, however real the injustices done within the framework of the imperial administration, they do not compare to the universal disaster the world would endure in its absence.

What seems to emerge, then, from this speech and from *Agricola* 21 is a remarkable image of the empire: it destroys freedom; it is the setting for corruption, vice, and injustice; and it is the best of all realizable orders of the world. There is nothing romantic about this empire, nothing to invite panegyric; its virtue is that it is not the worst alternative. Yet no more than that is required to provide sound justification for the empire: in the end it does not matter whether the empire is good and liberty bad or the empire is bad and liberty worse. Perhaps surprisingly, then, in light of the negative tone of *Agricola* 21 and Calgacus' speech, by the time the latter has ended *Agricola* would appear basically to confirm the necessity and desirability of Roman domination of the world.

After Agricola's defeat of Calgacus and his Caledonians, however,

Tacitus takes things in a direction that causes us to view in a new light not only this image of the empire but also that of the principate. The key step in this development is the biographer's sustained, implicit analogy between the treatment of subjects and foreigners by the empire and that of Romans by Rome's emperors (Liebeschuetz 1966, 138–139). Although during his long narrative of Agricola's governorship (Ag. 18–39) Tacitus has paid no attention to the figure of the emperor, with chapter 40 Domitian becomes suddenly prominent in the story. Fearful that Agricola's military successes and fame will make him a rival for the throne, Domitian recalls him from Britain and Agricola's subsequent life in the capital is defined by the emperor's presence and attention: Agricola aims to live inconspicuously so as not to arouse Domitian's anger (Ag. 40.4); he is obliged to beg the emperor's permission not to put his name in for the governorship of Asia or Africa (Ag. 42.1–2); and his final illness captivates the emperor's attention (Ag. 43.2–3). Agricola's return to Rome and Domitian's sudden ubiquity in the narrative have an important effect: our field of vision, long focused on the relationship between Agricola and his province, instantly expands to include the relationship between the emperor and his fellow citizens. Tacitus then exploits that widened scope to present us, suddenly, with unexpected resemblances between Roman government of the world and the emperor's government of Romans. Domitian is presented as “pacifying” Agricola in the same sense that Agricola had pacified Britain (21.1, 40.4). In his declaration about the relative merits of Agricola's lifestyle and that of the martyrs, he uses the phrase “deference and restraint” of the conduct of his father-in-law toward Domitian; precisely that phrase had been used by Calgacus in his speech, where he refers to “the Romans, whose outrages you would in vain seek to escape through deference and restraint” (30.3).

The points of resemblance Tacitus indicates between empire and principate are not randomly chosen. Together they draw our attention to the problems of the legitimacy of the form of power in question and the appropriate way of living under it. In the case of the empire, as we have seen, the unpleasant features of the system that emerge in practice seem to be compensated by the broader peace it ensures. The analogy to the principate would then seem to point to a similar conception of that institution: while it had spelled the end of liberty for Romans, it also had saved them from that hell of civil war that had consumed their society in the first century BCE. From here the analogy is easy to flesh out. Calgacus' misguided railing against Rome's depredations finds its counterpart in the activities of the martyrs (cf. McGing 1982, 22–23; Rutledge 2000, 87–90): both protest the ugly effects of the power they confront, without taking account of

the more terrible danger it suppresses. The saner course is to follow Agricola: to avoid conflict with the power, “to pray for good rulers, but to put up with them no matter what they are like” (*Hist.* 4.8.2). Roman governors and generals, in turn, are like the emperor: in practice, both can be monsters, but the possibility of good ones emerging – like the general Agricola or the emperor Trajan – provides a crucial argument that the structure of power atop which they sit is better than having no structure of power at all.

This outlook complements key features of the broader program of *Agricola*: its persistent defamation of Domitian, its deprecation of the martyrs, and its praise of Trajan and Agricola. Indeed there is no overpowering reason not to see in the biography a systematic and serious defense of the empire and of the principate. Yet there are reasons to hesitate. It is one thing to say that it is right that for their own safety foreign peoples should surrender their autonomy and obey the dictates of Rome; Cicero does this casually (*Q. fr.* 1.34). It is not clear, however, that it is equally unproblematic to say that Roman senators should lose their freedom and submit to an emperor. In other words, because there is a real difference between Cato and a Caledonian, simply suggesting that the principate’s effect on Roman elites is like that of the empire on barbarians may itself be to question the legitimacy of the principate. On that view the analogy could be much more provocative than at first we realized: it invites the Roman senator to look at his condition not as what conventional public discourse portrayed it to be, a limited but safer freedom, but as that of one conquered and subjected to an alien power. That, by contrast, would be an *Agricola* more in keeping with the values that the martyrs professed, a work that emphasizes not that the problem of civil war has been solved but that the solution is itself outrageous. The difference, of course, is that the martyrs had been forthrightly contrary; if a voice of protest against the principate is to be detected in *Agricola*, it is only within the context of an apparent endorsement of that order.

Here, I would suggest, we encounter something broadly characteristic of the interaction of Tacitus’ literary and political careers. His political life was a product of the principate, and when he published *Agricola* he had only recently attained the highest office in the state by imperial patronage. The book intervenes in this political career in that it aims to explain and validate the life not only of the honorand but also of men who had lived as he had, like Tacitus and Trajan, and from that perspective it can only support the proposition that the principate is better than its alternative. At the same time, as we have seen, the world into which *Agricola* envisions itself emerging has little interest in men who had succeeded under Domitian and

survived; the objects of public enthusiasm it identifies are, instead, the martyrs, and its professed task is to make a place of honor for the life of service (or “compliance,” depending on your perspective) alongside the life of resistance (or “selfish ostentation,” from the point of view of Ag. 42.3–4). Deprecating the martyrs’ path is not, however, the only imaginable means of approaching parity with them: you could also claim to be on their side. It is here that the possible undercurrent of outrage about the principate could serve an important purpose: for all that *Agricola* does to endorse the established order, it also might be taken to reflect an author who, behind the public façade, rejects that order and stands in sympathy with others who have become famous by defying it. In this way, both the advantages of conformity and compliance and the cachet of subversiveness become available to the biographer and are there for a reflective reader to tease out and weigh against each other.

It remains to confront one last question raised by the analogy between the empire and the principate developed in the last chapters of *Agricola*. If we do detect within the work’s conservative outlook on the Roman political order intimations of a more radical attitude, one not content with the usual explanation that the principate’s suppression of civil war makes up for its flaws, are we also then moved to look with distrust on the usual justifications of the empire? The very nature of analogy makes that a possible conclusion, but for a couple of reasons it seems a hard one to reach. To begin with, the sequence in which the analogy becomes clear is such that the realization we are led to is that the condition of Roman citizens bears an uncomfortable resemblance to that of imperial subjects, and not the other way around. More significant, however, is the question of audience. There would have been listeners interested, or titillated, to hear rumblings against the principate; in any case, the nature of the relationship between emperor and the elite man was a matter of immediate and practical consequence for Tacitus and people like him. It is less clear whether there would have been an audience sympathetic to doubts about the empire: while Roman elites may have been content to regard themselves as the victims of an intrinsically unjust political order, the idea that they themselves were the eager agents of the extension and perpetuation of another intrinsically unjust political order would have been a less appealing conclusion. If we are to detect in *Agricola*’s analogy any current of ideological challenge to the principate as an institution, then, we need not assume that such a challenge applies equally to the empire. In fact, Roman public discourse about government had long centered on another analogy (Roller 2001, 213–287) that worked only in one direction: when you likened a dynast’s subjection of free Roman citizens to a

slave master's power over his slaves, you were condemning that dynast, but you were not also condemning slavery itself as unjust.

5. Styles and Genres

Though it is convenient to treat *Agricola*'s formal properties under a separate heading, stylistic and generic qualities are central to the impression the work makes on a reader. Tacitus' way of writing at the level of word, phrase, sentence, and paragraph and his shifting deployment of the conventions of now one, now another familiar literary mode have a powerful impact: these features are both densely allusive, creating ties and allegiances between *Agricola* and traditions in the broader Roman literary and cultural world, and are themselves a demonstration of the author's literary virtuosity.

There is little harm in calling *Agricola* a biography. Tacitus describes its job as "telling the story of a life" (Ag. 1.3, 1.4) and "handing down to posterity the deeds and ways of [a] famous [man]" (1.1). It is, then, a *vita*, what in Greek would be called a *bios*: a "life." We can also speak of a style that characterizes the whole work: throughout, it shows that tendency toward brevity, imbalance, variation, and epigram that distinguished the work of the historian Sallust and would be the most salient feature of the language of Tacitus' later historical narratives despite modification, refinement, and experiment. What someone reading *Agricola* in Latin will notice above all, however, is the variety of stylistic and generic modes that come to the fore at different points in the work. As many observers have registered, the preface and epilogue show features of the full, balanced, and rhythmical mode of Cicero's oratory; the narrative portion of the work reflects the influence of Sallust, but reminiscences of Livy, often imagined as Sallust's literary opposite, are frequent as well. These affinities extend beyond the level of diction, syntax, and sentence structure; whole sections of *Agricola* rework the language and themes of a notable moment or kind of moment in the work of these authors: thus the narrative of *Agricola*'s youth draws upon Sallust's descriptions of the upbringing of Catiline, Jugurtha, Marius, and the young Romans of the early and middle republic (Sal., *Cat.* 5.1–8, 7; *Jug.* 6.1, 7.1, 62.2–63.3; Guerrini 1977); the speeches of Calgacus and *Agricola* recall those of Scipio Africanus and Hannibal before the Battle of Ticinum at Livy 21.40–44 (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 265); the concluding consolation for the death of *Agricola* strongly recalls Cicero's consolation for the death of Crassus (*de Orat.* 3.2.8–3.3.12; Bews 1987, 202–203). Different sections of *Agricola* thus

receive a different literary-historical pedigree, encoded in their very language; rather than settling itself into a specific tradition, *Agricola* subsumes several and so advertises that by itself the “Ciceronian,” “Livian,” or even “Sallustian” tradition would be inadequate to the tasks *Agricola* has before it.

The generic diversity of *Agricola* gives this impression as well. From the beginning the book has an air of multiplicity: the opening sentence echoes not only the elder Cato’s programmatic description of his historical work *Origins* (HRRel Cato fr. 1) but also his reference to an archaic practice of singing praise-poetry at banquets (Cic., *Brut.* 75; *Tusc.* 1.3, 4.3). Before the preface has concluded we have been made to think of other kinds of writing as well. Mention is made of the memoirs of two republican figures (Ag. 1.3), of the works in which Arulenus Rusticus and Herennius Senecio had praised the martyrs Thræsea Paetus and the elder Helvidius Priscus (2.1); of a history Tacitus plans to write himself that will supply “a record of our former servitude and an attestation of our current felicity” (3.3); and finally, indirectly, of the genre of funeral oration, when Tacitus writes that *Agricola* “because it is dedicated to the honor of my father-in-law will, for its claim to fulfill a family duty, meet either with praise or at least with pardon” (3.3). *Agricola* is remarkable for not closely resembling, strictly, any of these things, but at the same time being something like all of them. This impression of imminent generic variety created by the preface is then borne out as the work proceeds. Once the narrative has reached *Agricola*’s governorship of Britain, Tacitus turns to an ethnographical excursus on Britain and its inhabitants (Ag. 10–13.1); not only are digressions of this kind customary in historical writing, but applying them in this way to articulate a short work is a familiar technique of Sallust in his two historical monographs (Petersmann 1991, 1794–1800). This excursus gives way to a retrospective of the history of Roman involvement in Britain, which stretches far back in time before the period of *Agricola*’s lifetime covered in the narrative proper; this sort of retrospect too is a feature of historical writing. The narrative of the governorship then becomes strongly historiographical: in it time is kept in a quasi-annalistic fashion, with the general’s annual campaigns forming the structuring principle; before the final battle we receive the speeches of Calgacus and *Agricola*; and the battle and its aftermath are treated in a lively and detailed fashion. With *Agricola*’s return to Rome, however, the character of the narrative changes sensibly and focuses closely on the relationship between jealous emperor and successful general. Although no work of the “Deaths of Famous Men” genre mentioned above survives, nor do we have anything of the encomia of Thræsea Paetus and Helvidius Priscus Tacitus mentions (Ag. 1.3), Tacitus may here adopt some of their

tropes and language as well (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 298). In the final chapters Tacitus' language becomes that of consolation and of eulogy, and assumes again the oratorical character of the preface: *Agricola* here becomes that funeral laudation that Tacitus could not give for *Agricola*.

I have already suggested that the stylistic and generic diversity of *Agricola* both signals the set of tasks the work is aimed at and equips it to perform them. In one sense *Agricola*'s job is to resemble the books about the martyrs, which accounts for one set of characteristics. In another sense, though, it aims to celebrate an altogether different mode of life from that of the martyrs, one that centers on conquest, and it captures that mode of life via a specifically historiographical presentation. Then again, on the one hand the work has a celebratory purpose, to magnify the achievements of *Agricola*; on the other, it dwells on a wicked emperor, an era hostile to virtue, and ugly moral decline. It is at once a narrowly personal undertaking, a token of duty from son-in-law to father-in-law, and a very public and indeed epochal one: in the preface it is Tacitus who first speaks out after the Domitianic silence, and so in a way inaugurates the new era in company with Nerva and Trajan (Ag. 3). It is also a link and a point of transition between Tacitus' life and his literary career: a link in that it plays the role of the funerary honors Tacitus owes *Agricola* and is a public, circulating, highly literary text; a point of transition, in that it grafts onto an existing public life of offices and practice in the law courts a future literary career as a historian (Ag. 3.3). To this array of sometimes competing, sometimes complementary functions, the stylistic and generic diversity forms a natural complement: *Agricola* is on one view a single work, but on another many works at once.

6. The Historical Value of *Agricola*

Agricola gives us important historical information, but its value has to be assessed in light of the work's literary and political functions and above all of its function as an organ of praise and blame (cf. Hanson 1987, 13–23). The two fields of historical knowledge to which its testimony is most important are the history of Roman activity in Britain and the history of the rule of Domitian. On the first question, the preservation of *Agricola* means that we possess far more information about the period of *Agricola*'s administration than we would otherwise have: without it, we would still be aware of *Agricola*'s existence, but just barely. As it is, we have good information on where the Roman army was fighting in each of the

years of his governorship and with what result, as well as much incidental detail. Furthermore, in *Agricola* Tacitus had access to a source with excellent firsthand knowledge of the events described, and in fact it has been proposed that Tacitus himself served for a time under *Agricola* in Britain (Birley 2000, 237–238). That very relationship, however, and the encomiastic orientation of the work also demand caution. It was part of the rhetoric of historical writing that authors would pledge to be free of personal obligation or enmity (Marincola 1997, 158–174; see also Levick in this volume). But *Agricola* is not a history; it is a work whose purpose is precisely to fulfill a personal obligation to *Agricola*. Its readers would not have expected its aim to be scrupulous impartiality, but rather the doing of honor to *Agricola*. This consideration might affect our assessment of many features of Tacitus' account: how important, for example, was the Battle of Mons Graupius? How deficient were *Agricola*'s predecessors in the governorship?

An analogous set of concerns surrounds the value of *Agricola* as an approach to the rule of Domitian. As we saw above, in the period after his death there were great incentives to defame him, as the legitimacy of the current regime rested on the illegitimacy of the preceding one; those incentives have deeply compromised our confidence in our evidence, including that supplied by *Agricola* (Saller 2000 [1990]). In *Agricola* some details are suspect: like Pliny (*Pan.* 16.3), Tacitus talks about a sham triumph Domitian had celebrated, using slaves disguised as war captives (*Ag.* 39.1) – but a story like this was told about the emperor Gaius, too (Suet., *Cal.* 47). This kind of echo suggests that in the record about Domitian we are at least sometimes dealing not with facts but with accusations that belong to a common fund of rhetoric that could be used to portray a ruler as a tyrant.

The most prominent place where the nature of Tacitus' presentation of Domitian invites examination is his account of his relationship with *Agricola*. Through innuendo, reports of rumors, and selective communication of facts, Tacitus creates the strong impression of Domitian's hostility: when *Agricola* is finally recalled from Britain after eight campaigns, it is our impression that it is really because the emperor envies his success; when he asks to be excused from the lottery for a proconsulship, we are told that it is because agents of the jealous emperor twisted his arm; when his failing health arouses Domitian's interest, we are informed that there were rumors that it was because the emperor had had him poisoned. Whether the explanations offered are true or not – and they may be – all are consistent with a systematic program of denigrating Domitian and distancing him from *Agricola*, and no space is wasted on any explanations inconsistent with such a program. Some, however, have

seen reason to feel encouraged by Tacitus' procedure in this account, because while he consistently insinuates the worst explanation he does not go so far as to confirm it: thus, in recounting the conditions of Agricola's final illness, he writes that "the grief was made more acute by the persistent rumor that he had been done in by poison: for my part, I would not venture to make any definite assertion" (Ag. 43.2), but then goes on to list details in support of the poisoning theory. However, even if we are inclined (and we need not be) to extrapolate from this instance to a hypothetical broader policy Tacitus is following in *Agricola* – that is, operating with a free hand in all other respects but refusing to assert as fact events that he is not sure occurred – it does not take us very far. Often what we want to know is not a narrowly defined fact, but what the motives and circumstances surrounding it were, and concerning those we have no more reason to feel confident about Tacitus' testimony than about that of any of the rest of the post-Domitianic tradition.

7. Concluding Remarks: *Agricola* in Tacitus' Career

Agricola is a work embedded in the historical moment of 98 CE. By Tacitus' profession it could not have existed without the elimination of Domitian and the establishment of the new era of Nerva and Trajan. It addresses pressing, topical questions: How ought one to have acted under Domitian? Was it acceptable to have survived? To have complied? To have prospered? It is, moreover, part of a general cultural response that sought quickly to place an interpretation on the present and immediate past; in that sense it is like the "Deaths of Famous Men," like the sanctions against Domitian's memory, and like the younger Pliny's "Speech of Thanksgiving."

For all that *Agricola* belongs to 98 CE, however, Tacitus' later work constantly revisits its central preoccupations. In fact, we can look at the relationship between *Agricola*, Domitian, and Tacitus in *Agricola* as a kind of encapsulation of the Tacitean historiographical endeavor. The world of *Histories* and *Annals* is a society dominated by the power of a monarch but populated by elites who position themselves variously in relationship to that power, fighting it, denying it, obeying it, deprecating it, abetting it, flattering it, coveting it, trying to take it for themselves. While Domitian and *Agricola* each represent only one possibility for what the monarch and what the elite man can look like – for Tacitus character and personality matter and affect how an emperor or a senator behaves – the power that Domitian holds and

Agricola reacts to is the same as that which every emperor wielded and every senator felt. Furthermore, as in *Agricola*, so later Tacitus' function is to counter, to the extent he can, one significant effect of that power – its corruption of truth. Power is, among other things, power to enforce representations of reality: thus, Domitian was able to celebrate a triumph for victories that had never happened and to withhold recognition from Agricola for victories that had. In *Agricola*, Tacitus professes to correct this misrepresentation, ensuring that Domitian and Agricola both receive the memory they deserved, not the one that Domitian's power had fashioned for them; on a larger scale, that is the function that Tacitus' great historical works claim for themselves, too, assigning to all of their subjects the reputation that they had in fact earned, not the ones that had been made for them by the operation of power.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The standard Latin text is in Winterbottom and Ogilvie (1975). Ogilvie and Richmond (1967) remains the standard commentary, although at the time of this writing C. S. Kraus and A. J. Woodman are collaborating on a new text and commentary. Heubner (1984) and Soverini (2004) are useful commentaries for those with German or Italian. For an English translation of *Agricola*, with helpful introduction and notes, see Birley (1999). On Agricola's life, see Syme (1958, 19–29); for his life and career through the governorship, see Birley (2005, 71–95); on his campaigns as legate in Britain, Hanson (1987). On the value of the literary record, including *Agricola*, for assessing Domitian, see Saller (2000 [1990]). Among general discussions of the work, begin with Syme (1958, 19–29, 121–25) and Liebeschuetz (1966). Recent attempts at a synthetic interpretation of the work, in English, include Braund (1996, 147–176), Clarke (2001), Whitmarsh (2006), and Sailor (2008, 51–118); this last expands on ideas sketched out in section 3 of this chapter. On the representation of the empire, see Rutledge (2000) and Evans (2003). On the preface alone, see Leeman (1973, 199–208) and Sailor (2004); on the epilogue alone, Harrison (2007). For the style of *Agricola*, see Ogilvie and Richmond (1967, 21–31) and Bews (1987). Those with German are encouraged to read Lausberg (1980) on echoes of the Sallustian figures of Caesar and Cato in *Agricola*, Marx (1937) on Tacitus' relationship to the “Deaths of Famous Men” literature, and Schwarte (1979) on the ways in which the politics of 96–98 CE may have affected *Agricola*; readers of French might look at Sablayrolles (1981)

on the political implications of Tacitus' style and at Raepset-Charlier (1991) on Agricola's life; in Italian, see Guerrini (1977) on the representation of Agricola's youth.

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Germania

James B. Rives

“Germania as a whole is separated from the Gauls and from the Raeti and Pannonii by the Rhine and Danube rivers, and from the Sarmatians and Dacians by mutual fear or mountains” (*Ger.* 1.1; all translations of *Germania* come from Rives 1999). So opens the oddest, although by no means the most complex or perplexing, of the surviving works of Tacitus. Its peculiarity is due in part to this opening: Tacitus does not bother to orient his readers but plunges them immediately into the subject at hand. In this respect *Germania* differs strikingly from *Agricola*, the work that immediately precedes it, whose elaborate preface gives readers a clear idea of the context within which to interpret what follows. In *Germania*, by contrast, Tacitus lets his readers decide for themselves the significance of what he relates. Not surprisingly, different readers have found very different meanings, interpreting the text as everything from a literary exercise to a political pamphlet. But the text has also been put to uses that Tacitus certainly could not have intended and in all likelihood could never have foreseen. After its rediscovery in the early modern period, it quickly became established as an authoritative account of the ancestors of *die Deutschen*, those peoples whom modern English speakers, adopting the name that Tacitus used for the inhabitants of northern Europe, call “Germans.” Although there is undoubtedly some degree of historical continuity between the peoples Tacitus described and the population of modern Germany, the close identity that was often asserted in the past is now more often seen as an ideological construct. It is for this reason that throughout this chapter I use the Latin “Germani” instead of the English “Germans” to denote the people who were the subject of Tacitus’ monograph; this is not merely a scholarly affectation, but an ongoing reminder that the two terms are not simple equivalents.

Since Tacitus supplied us with none of the context needed to

interpret *Germania*, it becomes all the more important that we supply it ourselves. In the first section I consider the date of its composition and its location in Tacitus' own life and career and in the history of Roman interactions with the Germani; I then turn to a survey of the Greco-Roman tradition of ethnography on which Tacitus drew and a brief consideration of his sources. In the second section I discuss some of the text's distinguishing features, particularly Tacitus' use of the Germani as a vehicle for commenting on Roman *mores* and his careful organization of material, and then briefly review some of the main interpretations, both historiographical and political, that have been advanced in recent decades. The third section examines the historical value of the text as an account of the peoples of ancient northern Europe and closes with some observations about its reception. For clarity of exposition I have distinguished these various issues, but anyone who works with the text in any detail quickly finds that in practice they merge into each other in ways that are often difficult to disentangle.

1. Contexts

The only evidence for the date of *Germania* is Tacitus' reference, in his survey of Roman wars with the Germani (*Ger.* 37.2), to the second consulship of Trajan in the first half of 98 CE. Since the context clearly suggests that Tacitus wanted to bring the story down to the time of writing, it is almost universally agreed that *Germania* dates to the early or middle part of 98 CE; arguments for other dates (e.g., Beck 1998, 72–102; Schuhmann 2004) have not found much acceptance. Tacitus thus wrote *Germania* immediately after he finished *Agricola* and presumably some time before he began on the *Histories* (we know only that he was at work on the latter by ca. 106 CE: Plin., *Ep.* 6.16 and 20). He had held the suffect consulship only the year before but was hardly finished with his public career, since his celebrated prosecution of Marius Priscus was to come in 100 CE (Plin., *Ep.* 2.11) and his proconsulship of Asia lay some fifteen years in the future (Syme 1958, 664–665). Domitian, so vivid and noxious a presence in *Agricola*, was still less than two years dead; the elderly Nerva had died just a few months before; and the new emperor Trajan was probably still on the Rhine, where he had been serving as governor of Germania Superior.

These recent events were no doubt what led Tacitus to turn his thoughts to the Germani, who had loomed large in the reign of Domitian and might reasonably be expected to do so again in that of

Trajan. The barbarians of northern Europe had of course haunted the Roman imagination since the Gallic sack of Rome in the early fourth century BCE. After Roman conquests of Gallic territory in northern Italy and southern Gaul, a series of major defeats at the hands of the Germanic Cimbri and Teutones at the end of the second century BCE revived the threat of barbarian invasions from the north. Whether the Cimbri and Teutones were identified as Germani at that time is not clear; the first secure evidence for the name “Germani” is an isolated quotation from Posidonius’ *Histories* of the 70s or 60s BCE (fr. 73 Edelstein and Kidd 1989 = Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 4.153e). Tacitus himself comments on the name, which he says originally belonged to the first people to cross the Rhine into Gaul (*Ger.* 2.3), but the exact significance of his remark is unclear, and the passage has been one of the most frequently debated in the entire text (Lund 1991b, 1995–2027; Schön 2006). Whatever the origin of the name, it must have become much more familiar in the Roman world as a result of Caesar’s conquest of Gaul. Several scholars have argued that it was in fact Caesar who popularized the idea of the Germani as a large-scale grouping of peoples, similar to but separate from the Gauls (Lund 1998, 36–57; Rives 1999, 24–27).

For Caesar, the Germani represented the natural limit to his conquests; for Augustus, they represented the next object of his territorial ambitions. From 12 to 9 BCE, while his stepson Tiberius campaigned in Illyricum and Pannonia, Tiberius’ brother Drusus campaigned across the Rhine, reaching the Elbe in 9 BCE only to die on the return march. The Senate awarded Drusus the posthumous victory-name Germanicus, which was inherited by his son and later used by Gaius and Claudius as part of their imperial titles. Tiberius took over the job of pacifying Germania, and by 6 CE the situation seemed stable enough for a push into new territory. At that point, however, a major revolt in Illyricum called Tiberius away, and the command in Germania passed to P. Quinctilius Varus. Someone had misjudged the degree of pacification, however, and in 9 CE Varus’ army of three legions was massacred by the Germani in an ambush. Tiberius was brought in to stabilize the situation, but his campaigns and the later ones of Drusus’ son Germanicus were clearly meant only to restore Roman prestige, not to reconquer the territory. The frontier was effectively brought back to the Rhine, and the Germani remained the only foreign people to have successfully thrown off the Roman yoke. That fact, and the glamor of the name Germanicus, made a victory over Germani one of the great prizes of Roman military ambitions. It is thus not surprising that Domitian, who had always lived in the shadow of his father Vespasian and older brother Titus, began planning a campaign in Germania shortly after becoming

emperor in 81 CE. We have few details about his war against the Chatti across the central Rhine (Strobel 1987; Jones 1992, 128–131), but he clearly regarded it as successful enough to justify a triumph and the adoption of the coveted name Germanicus, even though Tacitus (Ag. 39.1; Ger. 37.5) and Pliny (Pan. 82.4–5) would later mock his claims of conquest. Domitian's military attentions were thereafter concentrated on the Danube, where increasing problems ultimately led to Trajan's conquest of the Dacians in the early second century CE. At the time that Tacitus was writing *Germania*, however, this long-term shift of attention from the Rhine to the Danube would not have been clear.

If these political and military events were what inspired Tacitus to write an account of the Germani, he was able to find literary models for such a work in the long-standing Greco-Roman tradition of ethnography. This tradition extended back to Hecataeus of Miletus, who around 500 BCE composed a work called *Periegesis*, a geographically organized compendium of information about the peoples and places of the Mediterranean world. Later writers developed Hecataeus' example along three main lines: the periegetic tradition, which maintained the format of a geographic survey with brief entries on a series of peoples and places; the ethnographic digression within a larger historical work, for which Herodotus provided the classic model; and the ethnographic monograph, a stand-alone treatise on a particular people or region. Several periegeses of varying date and style have survived, and there are ethnographic digressions in the extant works not only of Herodotus but also of Roman writers such as Caesar (Gal. 6.11–28) and Sallust (Jug. 17–19). Tacitus himself included ethnographic sections in some of his other works, notably accounts of Britain in *Agricola* (10–12) and Judaea in the *Histories* (5.2–8). The ethnographic monograph seems also to have been a popular genre with Greek (not so much Latin) writers, but the only examples to survive complete are *Germania* itself and the later *Indika* of Arrian. Nevertheless, by making comparisons with the ethnographic digressions in historical works, we can get a fairly good idea of the genre's norms (see in general Rives 1999, 15–17; Dench 2007).

These norms partly took the form of a fairly standard set of topics. The essential element was of course a description of the people itself, usually with comments on their origin (whether they were natives or immigrants) and their customs; ethnographies that dealt with more civilized peoples sometimes included a dynastic or political history. Another regular subject was the land, which might involve discussions of borders, topography, climate, and resources. In addition to standard topics, ethnographies tended to draw on a common stock of

interpretive frameworks. Some of these we might describe as scientific, such as the climatic and astrological theories that explained the physical and behavioral characteristics of a people in terms of their climate or their celestial situation. Others were moralizing and presented the people in question as a model to be imitated or avoided. One popular stereotype was what Lovejoy and Boas (1935, 9–11) labeled “hard primitivism,” the idea that a people who lacked the amenities of civilization were also free from its corrupting effects and thus naturally virtuous. As we shall see, all these aspects of the ethnographic tradition left their mark on *Germania*.

If Tacitus was able to draw on a long tradition of ethnographic writing, he was equally able to draw on a wide range of sources about the Germani. The only authority that he mentions by name is Caesar (*Ger.* 28.1; cf. *Caes., Gal.* 6.24.1); Caesar, however, was clearly not a major source of data, and some scholars have argued that Tacitus’ description of the Germani deliberately differs from Caesar’s in key respects (Krebs 2010). Syme (1958, 127) proposed that Tacitus’ main source was the elder Pliny’s now-lost *Wars of Germania*, but the differences between *Germania* and Pliny’s account of Germania in his *Natural History* are so striking as to render any significant dependence unlikely (Rives 1999, 58–59). We may reasonably suppose that Tacitus in fact consulted all the readily available literary accounts of the Germani and their country, of which there must by his day have been a fair number, and perhaps also non-literary sources such as the itineraries of merchants; he may also have gathered information orally from people who could supply him with firsthand information. Whether he himself served on the Rhine, as some scholars have suggested, must remain an open question, given the lack of evidence one way or the other. Although in the end we can only guess how he went about compiling his data, the text itself gives the appearance of being a bricolage of quite varied material. Not surprisingly, in a few cases his information seems to have been out of date, but the suggestion that the treatise as a whole largely reproduces an outdated source is not really sustainable; on the contrary, Tacitus seems to have carefully shaped his material to reflect the conditions of his day (Rives 2002).

2. Interpretations

As we shall see below, scholarship on *Germania* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries mostly focused on the text as a source for the early history of the Germanic peoples. The first serious challenge to

this approach came in an important monograph by Eduard Norden (1923, first published 1920), whose concern was instead to locate it within the literary tradition of Greco-Roman ethnography. His main contention was that writers of ethnography tended to borrow material from their predecessors and that in doing so they deliberately or inadvertently transferred particular descriptive phrases from one people to another. He built his case around Tacitus' striking description of the Germani as *tantum sui similem*, "resembling only themselves" (*Ger.* 4.1); observing that a much earlier Greek writer applied a very similar phrase to the Scythians ([Hippoc.], *Aer.* 18), Norden argued that it had first been deliberately borrowed by Posidonius to describe the Cimbri, as a people associated with the Scythians, and then lifted from Posidonius by Tacitus, who regarded the Cimbri as simply one branch of the Germani. Although few scholars today would follow Norden in constructing this kind of precise literary genealogy, his work stimulated people to reexamine *Germania* not simply as a collection of data but as a deliberate literary production. In recent decades such literary approaches have become dominant, and most interpretations of *Germania* now tend to address one or both of two interlinked issues: Tacitus' depiction of the Germani and his overall purpose in writing the text in the way that he did.

Work like that of François Hartog on Herodotus (1988) has popularized the notion that Greeks and Romans developed their conceptions of foreign peoples largely as vehicles for reflecting on their own character and identity. Most current scholars would probably agree that this is true of *Germania*, which some have argued is about Rome above all (O'Gorman 1993). Tacitus' techniques in commenting on Roman society are often subtle, however, and their analysis requires some careful unpacking of apparently flat statements of fact. As an example, we may consider the following observation: "To loan out capital at interest and extend it into interest payments is unknown, and for that reason more effectively guarded against than if it had been banned" (*Ger.* 26.1). The first thing to notice is that this is an observation not about something that the Germani do, but something that they do not do. *Germania* abounds in these negative observations, which the reader can construe only by supplying the unstated point of comparison, that is, the customs and practices of the Romans. They thus function as a tool to ensure the constant presence of Rome in the reader's mind, even when it is absent from the surface of the text. The second point about this passage is the motif of hard primitivism. Tacitus represents the Germani as still at a cultural stage when the device of moneylending has not yet been discovered, and consequently as free of the evils that attend it. The last part of his

statement in particular evokes a commonplace of Roman moralizing, the idea that laws are simply a response to the growth of vice (cf., e.g., Sen., *Ep.* 90.4–6; Tac., *Ann.* 3.26). Finally, this image of a primitive virtue that antedates the advance of civilization would have reminded many Roman readers of their own idealized ancestors. Sallust, for example, in his brief moral history of Rome (*Cat.* 9–13), depicts the early Romans in precisely these terms: “Good morals were cultivated in both the civil and military spheres; social harmony was at a maximum, greed at a minimum; justice and right prevailed among them more by nature than by laws” (*Cat.* 9.1). The Germani, who have not yet learned to be greedy and so do not require laws against usury, thus appear here as a reflection of the Romans as they had once been.

Although in passages like this Tacitus fashions the Germani as an exemplary people who maintain the old-fashioned standards that the Romans themselves had abandoned, in others he depicts the Germani as upholding values that Romans also prized, such as military valor and devotion to liberty, but taking them to inappropriate extremes. Tacitus’ deployment of one particular motif nicely illustrates this tactic. Throughout the text he repeatedly calls attention to the constant presence of weapons in everyday Germanic life, including contexts where to the Roman way of thinking they were completely out of place, such as civil assemblies (*Ger.* 11.2 and 13.1) and banquets (22.1). According to Tacitus, arms even had a central role in major social rituals that in Rome were strictly civil events, such as coming-of-age ceremonies (13.1) and weddings (18.2). The former passage is particularly instructive. In describing how a young man is presented with his shield and spear at a public assembly, he explains that “this is their toga, this the first honour of youth; before this they seem a part of the household, afterwards part of the citizen body” (*Ger.* 13.1). Tacitus’ point of reference is as always Roman society, in which boys signaled their entry into manhood by formally setting aside the clothing of their childhood and donning the adult toga. But the toga was also the symbol *par excellence* of the civil as opposed to the military sphere (e.g., Cic., *Off.* 1.77); the claim that Germanic boys marked their entry into adult society by taking up weapons instead of a toga was thus a subtle demonstration that for the Germani there was in effect no civil sphere at all, only the military sphere. Militarism, which for Romans was indeed an important value, but one nevertheless balanced by others of equal significance, becomes among the Germani the only important value.

In still other passages Tacitus presents the Germani as mirror opposites of the Romans. Thus, in contrast to the discipline on which Roman tradition placed such emphasis, the Germani are repeatedly shown to be completely lacking in self-restraint. Tacitus’ comments on

their attitudes toward farming provide a good example. In the Roman tradition one of the most lauded stereotypes was that of the warrior-farmer, who used the same discipline and determination to tame both his enemy and his land; we need only think of Cincinnatus at his plow. What of the Germani? In describing the lavish rewards that a war-leader bestows upon his followers, Tacitus explains that “the means for this munificence comes from robbery and war” and adds that “one could more easily persuade them to challenge an enemy and earn their wounds than to plough the soil and await the annual harvest; indeed, it seems to them slothful and unmanly to acquire by sweat what one can obtain by blood” (*Ger.* 14.3). Qualities that Romans traditionally mapped onto one another are thus seen by the Germani, according to Tacitus, as diametrically opposed. In these ways, then, Tacitus fashions a multiplicity of shifting associations between Roman and Germanic practice; to some extent we might even think of *Germania* as like a fun-house hall of mirrors, in which Roman readers were able to see themselves and their values reflected back in a variety of distorted images.

But *Germania* is not simply “the mirror of Tacitus.” One of the most striking things about the text is its division into two sharply demarcated parts, roughly similar in length (the first somewhat longer than the second) but radically different in character. In the first part Tacitus provides a general ethnography of the Germani, covering all the standard topics of the tradition: the boundaries of *Germania* (chapter 1), the origin and physical characteristics of the Germani (chapters 2–4), and their institutions and customs, public (5–15) and private (16–27). It is to the content of the opening chapters that the full title of the work refers: *De origine et situ Germanorum*, “On the Origin and Geographical Situation of the Germani.” Much recent scholarship has concentrated on the first half of the work, since it is there above all that Tacitus builds up his portrait of the Germani as the Roman “other.” It is worth noting that he reinforces key features of that portrait by carefully structuring his material. For example, his account of the public institutions of the Germani climaxes with his description of the association between a *princeps*, leader, and his *comites*, retainers (*Ger.* 13–15). The arrangement makes this association seem the most central of Germanic institutions, more so than the public assemblies that he treats earlier and the kings and other leaders whom he mentions only in passing; it thus subtly reinforces his depiction of Germanic society as one constituted by militaristic and emotive bonds rather than the structures of civil society.

The second half of the text surveys the individual peoples of *Germania*, using the traditional format of a *periegesis*. This half falls

into two parts, the first treating the peoples across the Rhine (chapters 28–37) and the second those across the Danube (38–46). Tacitus again uses structure to give emphasis, since he gives pride of place among the former peoples to Domitian’s opponents, the Chatti (30–31), and among the latter to the Semnones (39), a people with whom Domitian had high-level diplomatic contact during his wars on the Danube (Dio 67.5.3; cf. Rives 2002, 170–173). The second half of *Germania* has as a whole attracted much less attention than the first, although particular passages in it are among the most discussed parts of the entire work. One of these is a prayer that Tacitus inserts after his account of a Germanic people who were annihilated by their neighbors: “Long, I pray, may foreign folk cherish if not love for us at least hatred for each other, since with the destiny of our empire pressing onwards fortune can grant nothing greater than the discord of our foes” (*Ger.* 33.2). This passage has been the subject of intense scrutiny as scholars have tried to parse it for insight into Tacitus’ opinions and concerns: does it indicate an optimistic or pessimistic view of the empire (Benario 1968; Lund 1991b, 2127–2147)? I would suggest, however, that the chief interest of the second half lies not in its particulars but in its very existence. Because of it, the text as a whole cannot be regarded simply as an ethnographic monograph; it is instead half monograph and half periegesis, a combination that on the basis of our available evidence seems to have been highly unusual. It is above all this innovative structure that suggests that Tacitus’ intentions went beyond simply an exploration of the Germani as the Roman “other.”

Any speculation about the purpose of the text as a whole must accordingly take into account both its halves and not just the more typically ethnographic first part. We may reductively but conveniently divide general interpretations into two main categories, the historiographical and the political. Of the former, some lay particular stress on *Germania* as an early work of Tacitus. Syme, for example, who had a fairly low opinion of *Germania*, quickly dispensed with it in a chapter titled “An Historian’s First Steps” (Syme 1958, 125–129), the implication being that it was a sort of preliminary exercise with which Tacitus began honing the skills needed for the great historical works to come. Some earlier scholars went even further in this direction, suggesting that *Germania* was written as an ancillary study or excursus for the *Histories*, although the striking differences in the way the two texts portray the Germani tell against that proposal. A more general problem with all these approaches is that categorizing *Germania* as a preliminary exercise does not really help us understand what Tacitus was trying to do. It is important to remember that while he may at the time have been only at the start of his development as a historian, he was already one of the most accomplished orators in

Rome and hardly a literary novice. We would do better to assume that *Germania* is a fully realized work on its own terms.

I will here note just two possible historiographical interpretations. One of these is to read *Germania* as a historian's attempt to analyze the reasons why the Germani remained the only people to have successfully resisted Roman domination. On this reading we might characterize the first part of the text as a description of a genus and the second part as an enumeration of its species. The fundamental traits of the genus, that is, the militarism and lack of restraint that characterize Germanic society, would do much to explain their successful resistance of the Romans (Lund 1991a, 1954–1956). The lengthy list of particular peoples in the second part would then provide further reason why the Romans had been unable to make headway against so numerous and widespread a people. The key to the text as a whole would accordingly lie in Tacitus' declaration that "the liberty of the Germani is fiercer than the monarchy of Arsaces" (*Ger.* 37.3). Alternatively, we can read Tacitus' detailed description and thorough enumeration of the Germanic peoples as in itself an enactment of Roman control over them, intellectually if not physically. By rendering them the objects of Roman knowledge, he subjects them to a more effective Roman dominance than Domitian had ever been able to achieve. In this respect *Germania* also functions as a writer's demonstration that where the Roman sword had failed, the Roman pen could succeed. This alternative interpretation thus stands the first on its head, while not in fact being incompatible with it.

Turning to political interpretations, we may first notice how the ghost of Caesar hovers over the text. As I have already mentioned, Caesar is the only earlier authority on the Germani whom Tacitus acknowledges by name (*Ger.* 28.1). Moreover, he seems deliberately to evoke the first sentence of Caesar's *Gallic War* (*Gallia est omnis*) in his own opening (*Germania omnis*), an allusion that has long been noted. The similarities may be more than verbal. The abrupt opening of Caesar's work served to signal that it was no history, to be endowed with the sort of elaborate preface typical of that genre, but a more practical type of document, the report of a general and a contribution to public affairs. Might not Tacitus have meant *Germania* to be something similar? That Tacitus favored Roman imperial expansion is apparent already in *Agricola*, where he tends to approve of Roman governors in proportion to their success in advancing Roman rule (*Ag.* 14.2–3 and 16.3–17.2) and goes out of his way to record Agricola's proposal for the conquest of Ireland (*Ag.* 24.3). We might well suppose that he was particularly affronted by the failure to conquer the Germani, which as we have seen had a special place in the Roman

political imagination; such a sentiment is suggested by his barbed reference to the Elbe, “a famous river once known through experience, but now through report alone” (*Ger.* 41.2), and by his complaint that in recent times the Germani “have been the subjects of triumphs more than conquests” (*Ger.* 37.5). But when Tacitus began writing *Germania* there was a new emperor with a strong military record, who even then was in command of the legions along the Rhine. Against this background, it is tempting to suppose that *Germania* was to some extent a call to arms, a political pamphlet encouraging Trajan to achieve the goal that Augustus had abandoned and Domitian had falsely claimed to have reached. A careful comparison of Tacitus’ depiction of the Germani with that of Caesar shows how he emphasized their impetuosity and lack of self-control and suggested ways that they could be undermined (Krebs 2010). Other scholars, however, scoff at the idea that Tacitus intended to offer specific advice: “It was not for the consular Cornelius Tacitus to play the mentor to a military emperor” (Syme 1958, 47). A less bold alternative would be to consider *Germania* as something akin to a modern intelligence report: the political elite in Rome were no doubt consumed with speculation about Trajan’s plans for Germania, and Tacitus offered his text as one contribution to that discussion (Beck 1998, 9–62). In the end, however, it is probably a mistake to look for a single overarching purpose to this text. Although *Germania* does not begin to compare with Tacitus’ major works in terms of length or complexity, its brevity and apparent simplicity should not lead us to assume that Tacitus could not have been exploring a wide range of ideas and concerns simultaneously.

3. History in *Germania*, *Germania* in History

As I noted above, scholarship on *Germania* for a long time treated the text primarily as a source of data for reconstructing early Germanic society; most commentators worked by correlating the information provided by Tacitus with the evidence of other sources and assumed that such correlations were essentially unproblematic. As a result, the historical accuracy of the text was much lauded, as in this pronouncement from the introduction of what was until recently the only available commentary in English: “So far as archaeological investigation can check its statements, the objective value of the *Germania* has, on the whole, been vindicated in a remarkable way by the research of recent times” (Anderson 1938, xxviii). Such scholars

were even able to come to terms with Norden's findings; Anderson, for example, dispensed with them by asserting that "identity of phraseology and identity in the general method of treating the subject have in truth little bearing on the trustworthiness of the statements" (1938, xxxiii). As we have seen, more recent scholarship has tended to take exactly the opposite approach, emphasizing the rhetorical and tendentious nature of the text and largely bracketing any consideration of its historical value. Nevertheless, there remain many historians and archaeologists who are unwilling to abandon *Germania* altogether, and so the question of how far and in what ways it can be used as a historical source remains an important one.

Our only means of evaluating Tacitus' information is to correlate it with other types of evidence. Contrary to the assumptions of earlier commentators, however, such correlations are fraught with complications. There are three main types of evidence: other Greek and Roman sources, archaeological discoveries from northern Europe, and the records of later Germanic-speaking peoples. All three are useful, but they all also involve significant problems. Other Greek and Roman sources are particularly useful in supplementing the information that Tacitus provides about individual peoples; it is from other texts, for example, that we learn about the prominence of the Chatti and the Semnones in the Germanic policy of Domitian. The texts also allow us to identify widespread stereotypes and ethnographic commonplaces. For example, Tacitus' characterization of the Germani as having "bodies that are big but strong only in attack" (*Ger.* 4.1) can be paralleled in other descriptions not only of Germani but also of Gauls (e.g., Livy 5.44.4). Similarly, his claim that the Germani debate important matters during feasts and then reconsider them the next day when they are sober (*Ger.* 22.3) reproduces very closely an observation of Herodotus about the Persians (1.133.3-4). But what other Greek and Latin sources cannot do is give us the means of evaluating these stereotypes and commonplaces; since they were all shaped by the same conventions and preconceptions that shaped Tacitus' account, they cannot provide any sort of objective check. Hence Anderson was essentially correct in pointing out that the identification of a commonplace does not in itself prove anything about its relation to historical reality.

To a large extent archaeological research contributes exactly the sort of independent data that we can never derive from other textual sources and so provides a solid basis for evaluating the text's historical reliability. Tacitus' account of Germanic arms offers one of the best opportunities for a comparison, since weapons from this period have survived in great numbers and have been carefully studied. His claim that shields and spears were normal, swords less common, and armor

and helmets rare (*Ger.* 6.1) in fact turns out to fit remarkably well with archaeological findings. Yet opportunities for this sort of exact comparison between statements in the text and the archaeological evidence are surprisingly few. Tacitus was not, by and large, particularly interested in the material culture of the people he was describing, but rather in their customs and *mores*. Moreover, interpreting archaeological data is itself a complex process, so that even when we can compare a statement in *Germania* with actual finds we must be wary of accepting apparent correlations at face value. For example, the evidence of coin hoards seems to offer ample confirmation of Tacitus' claim that the Germani preferred older to more recent Roman issues (*Ger.* 5.3), since the hoards that antedate the reign of Hadrian consist almost entirely of republican and to a lesser extent Augustan and Tiberian issues. Yet an examination of the hoards from Roman territory to the south and southeast of Germania reveals the same patterns, suggesting that they did not result from a particular preference on the part of the Germani but instead simply reflect the volume of currency in circulation at a given time (Wolters and Stoess 1985).

Last, there is the evidence of later Germanic texts. Earlier scholars, who identified the Germani depicted by Tacitus as part of a stable and transhistorical ethnic group, accepted without question the relevance of this material. In contrast, more recent scholars, who emphasize the extent to which the Germani of Tacitus' text were essentially a construct of the Roman imagination, tend to be very wary of it. Even those who regard later Germanic sources as useful for interpreting the text must take into account the fact that they range in date from four hundred to one thousand years after *Germania*; Germanic culture clearly underwent significant changes during this time, many of which were a result of Greco-Roman influence. As a result, although it is often easy to identify correspondences between particular statements in *Germania* and material in later Germanic sources, it is not always easy to evaluate them. For example, Tacitus says that "to take on the enmities as well as the friendships of one's father or kinsman is a firm obligation. But these do not endure without chance of resolution, for by a fixed number of cattle and sheep they can make amends even for manslaughter" (*Ger.* 21.1). His description seems to accord very well with what we know from later Germanic sources about blood-feuds and wergeld, a payment made in compensation for manslaughter that is well attested in the law codes of the early medieval Germanic kingdoms. "Why, any man will accept the blood-price paid for a brother murdered, a child done to death. And the murderer lives on in his own country – the man has paid enough, and the injured kinsman curbs his pride, his smoldering vengeful spirit, once he takes the

price.” That quotation, however, does not come from a medieval Germanic text but from the speech of Ajax to Achilles in the *Iliad*, urging him to accept Agamemnon’s offered compensation for Briseis (*Il.* 9.632–636, trans. Robert Fagles). So what relative weight do we assign to the early medieval material, which suggests observation of an actual Germanic custom, and to the Homeric passage, which points instead to a Greco-Roman commonplace about primitive societies? Although in this case the parallels between Tacitus’ text and the later evidence are close enough to suggest at least some historical basis for his claim, in many cases the answer is much less clear. Thus, while *Germania* remains an important source of information about the ancient populations of northern Europe, it needs to be used with full awareness of the significant problems involved.

Debates over the historical reliability of *Germania* are given a particular intensity because of the purposes to which the text has been put in the past. Perhaps no work of Greco-Roman antiquity has had a reception more fraught with devastating moral and political consequences; Momigliano proposed that “Homer’s *Iliad* and Tacitus’ *Germania* should be given high priority” on the list of “the hundred most dangerous books ever written” (1966, 112–113). Yet the danger posed by the work is strictly a modern phenomenon. Apart from a small handful of references in late Roman and Carolingian writers, there is little evidence that anyone was even aware of its existence for many centuries. When it resurfaced in the middle of the fifteenth century, however, it was quickly adopted by German nationalists seeking a suitably glorious past for their people. Jakob Wimpfeling, for example, used it as the basis for the ancient sections of his *Epitome of German History* of 1504, the first work to present a continuous history of the German people from antiquity to the High Middle Ages. As he himself wrote, he composed this history “lest, while other nations zealously disseminate the noble deeds of their ancestors, we should seem to doze perpetually, sleepy and mean spirited, despisers of our ancestral glory” (Rives 1999, 71–72).

The text acquired further prestige with the development of archaeology. The nationalist German archaeologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who adopted the principle that any clearly defined material culture grouping represented a distinct ethnic group, mined *Germania* for names to attach to the peoples that they identified; by classifying all these archaeologically attested peoples as “German” and by then tracing continuities in material culture, they were able to push “the history of the German nation” back into the Bronze Age and even earlier. More insidiously, Tacitus’ depiction of the Germani as “noble savages,” fierce and unconquered, pure in morals and bloodline, was integrated more and

more wholeheartedly into modern German ideology; in particular, his description of them as *tantum sui similem*, “resembling only themselves” (*Ger.* 4.1), was used to bolster claims of racial superiority over the other peoples of Europe. It is thus hardly surprising that Norden, when he tried to demonstrate that this phrase was simply a borrowing from earlier writers, was bitterly attacked. With the rise of the Nazi party, the authority of Tacitus’ text became practically an article of faith. As an example we may note the following assessment by the author of a paper on “the credibility of Tacitus” from 1934: “It is not only the astonishing range of accurate details, not only the minimal number of gaps, but above all the extraordinarily true and proper tone and spirit which gain for this little book its unrivalled worth ... It has often enough in the past served a noble politization of our spirit. May it continue to fulfill this purpose” (Naumann 1934, 27, quoted from Benario 1990, 173). An awareness of this congruence of scholarship on *Germania* with Nazi ideology is in fact crucial to any clear understanding of work on the text since World War II, which as we have seen has been informed by a strong reaction against this kind of positivistic and nationalistic interpretation.

4. Conclusion

I began this discussion by noting that *Germania* is the oddest of Tacitus’ works. By way of conclusion I will elaborate a bit further on this idea. The text is odd in part because of its tenuous connection with the rest of the Tacitean corpus. This is not to deny some obvious overlap in literary, moral, and political concerns. Although it is more rhetorical and in some ways less “Tacitean” than the major historical works, there is nevertheless an obvious stylistic affinity. Likewise, the interest in Rome’s relations with its northern neighbors, the endorsement of Roman imperialism, and the analysis of liberty and its limits can all be paralleled in Tacitus’ other writings. Yet many other themes that come to mind as typically Tacitean, such as the disjunction between appearance and reality, the moral and epistemological distortions brought about by absolute power, and the historian’s duty to reveal those problems, are either noticeably absent or at best present in highly elliptical forms. In this respect even *Dialogus de Oratoribus* has much closer connections with Tacitus’ other works.

It is no doubt for this reason that *Germania* has, for classicists, always been the most marginal of Tacitus’ writings. By contrast, it has long been of enormous interest to scholars in a variety of other fields.

For archaeologists of northern Europe, it has played a crucial role from the very start of their discipline; although advances in archaeological methodology mean that it no longer provides the overall interpretive framework that it did in the past, it remains an important point of reference. It retains a similar importance for students of medieval Germanic civilization, including Anglo-Saxonists. Last, but by no means least, it has for several centuries had a significant impact on the development of modern German identity, at times to disastrous effect. For this reason the reception of *Germania*, perhaps more than that of any other Greco-Roman text, has become inextricably intertwined with its interpretation.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The vast majority of scholarship on *Germania* is not surprisingly in German; Lund (1991b) provides a comprehensive and usefully annotated survey from the late nineteenth century to about 1989. The only English commentary for many decades was Anderson (1938); it remains useful, although many scholars would now agree that much of what it presents as fact is instead highly conjectural. Two recent commentaries are Benario (1999), including an English translation as well as a Latin text, and Rives (1999), more detailed but focusing on historical and historiographical issues and lacking a Latin text. Two easily available English translations also include extensive introductions and notes, those of Birley in the Oxford World's Classics series (1999) and Mattingly in Penguin Classics (2009; new edition revised by Rives). The most recent detailed commentaries in German are Lund (1988) and Perl (1990), both of which also include new editions of the Latin text.

Commentaries have been the usual format for large-scale work on *Germania*; most other secondary work consists of shorter pieces focusing on particular topics. Good overviews are available of the contributions of two important scholars, Lund (1991a) and Timpe (1995; see also 2007 and 2008). Other shorter discussions with broad implications include Devillers (1989), O'Gorman (1993), Beck (1998, 9–62), Rives (2002), and Krebs (2005, 31–110). On the place of *Germania* in the ethnographic tradition, see especially Norden (1923) and Lund (1990). On its reception and influence, see especially Krebs (2005) for the early modern period and Lund (1995) for the early twentieth century; Benario (1990) provides a good short survey, Krebs (2011) an excellent general study.

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Tacitus' Dialogus de Oratoribus

A Socio-Cultural History

Steven H. Rutledge

1. A History of Approaches and Problems

Students coming to Tacitus for the first time understand something of the dilemma of Alexander the Great's predecessors at Gordium. They have little choice but to untie the seemingly impossible syntactical knots Tacitus made of Latin, such as the tangled but masterful first paragraph of the *Agricola*, or the rapid, vivid, and thoroughly compact seven hundred years of history covered in the opening lines of the *Annals*. The *Dialogus*, though not easy by any means, would provide some refreshment to the student, were it not for the simple fact that it is rarely read since it is not considered representative of Tacitus' language or his ethos. The normally convoluted syntax of Tacitus' prose frequently yields to the Ciceronian period, and the voyeuristic appeal of collapsible boats, *sellarii* and *spintriae*, empresses turned nymphomaniacs, and fatal porcinis gives way to a genteel conversation concerning contemporary rhetoric, poetry, and the state of Roman education.

The work begins with a brief introduction addressed to Tacitus' friend, Fabius Justus, who was consul in 102. Tacitus laments the dearth of orators in his day and recalls that as a young man he heard a conversation that attempted to account for the already apparent decline. The discussion took place among three Romans of note, Marcus Aper, Vipstanus Messalla, and Curiatius Maternus; also present was Julius Secundus (who has only a small bit part in the work, see

Vretska 1955; Steinmetz 1988). Tacitus himself was present as an attentive student and a silent witness. Among the interlocutors, Secundus was known as an outstanding speaker (Quint., *Inst.* 12.10.11; cf. 10.1.120, 3.12; Suet., *Otho* 9), as was Messalla (Tac., *Hist.* 4.42.1); we know almost nothing elsewhere of Aper (see Syme 1958, 456, 799, who conjectured a full name of M. Flavius Aper; cf. Barnes 1986, 236–237), while concerning Maternus we have only conjecture.

Tacitus sets the work the day after Maternus had read a dramatic composition, offending some powerful members of Vespasian's court in the process. After Tacitus' introduction the work is divided into three sections: in the first Aper, possibly acting as a devil's advocate (Hass-von Reitzenstein 1970, 131–143; Deuse 1975), defends the state of modern oratory, though Aper's sincerity has had more defenders of late (Williams 1978, 42–43; Luce 1993, 18; Champion 1994; Goldberg 1999; Levene 2004, 188–190). Maternus, in turn, assails Aper's view as morally dubious and argues that the orator's profession is an unhappy one. Vipstanus Messalla, who arrives late on the scene, dives *in medias res* and gives a round-up of what, by then, were the usual suspects: moral decline, teachers of dubious character, and lazy students. He adds into the mix a brief analysis of the decline in rhetoric due to orators and teachers, both of whom have moved away from the high standard set by Cicero. The last speaker, Maternus, gives a historically grounded explanation: the late republic, with its turbulent politics, also facilitated an atmosphere whereby great oratory could flourish; he finishes, and the interlocutors go their own ways. As Luce notes (1993, 27–28), each of the speeches is set up as an opposing argument, and all are fairly formal in their structure.

Upon discovery of Tacitus' work in the Renaissance, the major differences between the style of the *Dialogus* and his other works led some, even into the twentieth century, to question its authenticity as genuinely Tacitean (Frot 1955; Landi 1929; see Mayer 2001, 18–22 for a good summary of this question). That controversy has now been satisfactorily resolved, in part due to a perceived relationship between the *Dialogus* and Pliny's letters (Murgia 1985; cf. Bruère 1954; Güngerich 1956). Apart from questions concerning authenticity, the *Dialogus* has traditionally attracted scholarship that has focused on two central areas. The first of these is the relationship, both theoretical and intertextual, between the *Dialogus* and Tacitus' contemporary, Quintilian (Bardon 1941; Güngerich 1951; Hermann 1955 and 1965; Syme 1958, 115; Heldmann 1980; Brink 1989). In addition, the place of Cicero and Ciceronianism in the *Dialogus* (and in the very style of the work) has naturally been of interest as well (Koestermann 1930; Michel 1962; Fantham 1978a and 1978b; Borzsak

1985; Döpp 1986; Levene 2004, 190–193). Scholarship has also concerned itself with the identity of the interlocutors, in particular Maternus, who is conjectured (I believe rightly) to have perished soon after the discussion took place (Frank 1937; Mattingly 1959; Cameron 1967; Matthiessen 1970; Barnes 1981 and 1986, 240–244; Kragelund 1987; Luce 1993, 24; Bartsch 1994, 104; Rutledge 2000; Manuwald 2001). The date of the work's publication is still a matter of dispute, and recently an earlier dating between 97 and 100 has been suggested (Murgia 1980; cf. Barnes 1986, 229–232; Brink 1994), rather than the previously accepted date of 102.

Many have noted a variety of internal contradictions and complexities within the work: Maternus, for example, purports to renounce active involvement in politics yet persists in confronting the imperial court. Although it is a work seeking the reasons for oratory's decline, that subject itself is not broached until about a third of the way through the dialogue. Moreover Messalla's explanation for decline appears well-trodden territory. As a result scholars have long puzzled over what the *Dialogus* is ultimately about: for Bartsch it is a matter of “double-speak” stemming from the repressive nature of the principate (1994, 98–147, especially 102–107); for Barnes (1986) it is an argument about which literary genre is worthy of pursuit in Tacitus' day; for Luce (1993) the work's various contradictions are a product of its rhetorical nature, while for Williams (1978) they stem from the conditions of its publication date having changed from that of the dramatic date. For Brink (1993) it constitutes an important and complex historical snapshot of Roman society under the Flavians. Only recently have some started to examine its larger historical or cultural milieu. Hence, Williams' study (1978, 26–48) set the work in the context of Roman discussions concerning decline, while Rudich (1985) explored its political context. Most recently Levene's fine discussion (2004) attempts to place the *Dialogus* in the literary historical tradition and argues that the contradictory nature of the speeches comes from an increasingly sophisticated account of literary history within the work itself, stemming from “a complex interaction of aesthetic and political factors” (also see Desideri 1985).

2. Social History in Antiquity

It is a given among contemporary scholars who study ancient history that the ancients simply did not write history in the modern sense. Clashes between empires, great set battles, and men whose lives variously were worthy of emulation or offered cautious warning were

the subjects central to historical writing. The theoretical concept underscoring historical composition is given its most extended treatment (among Latin authors) in Cicero (*Fam.* 5.12). He there speaks of the truth history demands but also remarks on the need for pleasure; this could be achieved by showing the vicissitudes of fortune and could provide the reader, in the end, with a sense of catharsis. Tacitus implicitly held the same theoretical notions concerning historical composition as Cicero. He also inherited the tradition that the proper and grand subjects for historical writing should be those of which Livy (for example) wrote, as is most clearly illustrated in the *Annals*, where he laments that he is doomed to report not about great conflicts between the plebs and the nobles, not about great battles and Rome's glorious past, but about a disinterested *princeps* and (by implication from the context in which he makes the remark) endless legal proceedings (*Ann.* 4.32). Elsewhere he pointedly notes that certain subjects deserve to be consigned to the *acta diurna* (the daily transactions or records of public business), rather than elucidated in history's grand procession (*Ann.* 13.31.1). The subject of ancient history was, of course, supposed to be one of "glory and grandeur," and we do not think of the Romans as writing what we would consider social history.

Of course, consciously or not, Romans did have a rudimentary concept of social history. The best known writers whom we might classify as working in this area include Suetonius, Varro, Pliny the Elder, and Cicero, and we could add more as well, such as Vespasian's minister Mucianus, who wrote a work on *Mirabilia*. Suetonius, for one, wrote on a myriad of topics, including courtesans, gambling, and Roman manners and customs (none now extant), while Varro famously wrote a long work on Roman religious customs of which we have relatively substantial knowledge thanks to Augustine. Pliny's *Natural History* with its vast array of subjects arguably includes an assortment of social and scientific histories; among these perhaps the most valuable and noteworthy is his discussion of art and artists. We could cite numerous other authors, some of them late antique and a number of them Greek, including Athenaeus, Macrobius, Aulus Gellius, and Plutarch. All of these treat a variety of topics that one would certainly not find on the pages of Sallust or Livy. Their subjects range from questions of grammar and literary history, to religious lore and custom, to culinary culture and prostitutes. What do such subjects constitute if not social history? Yet this body of work remains insufficiently excavated, in part because the literary form such history takes is often in the guise of the encyclopedia, the dinner conversation, or the dialogue. It has none of those elements to which we have become accustomed in writers ranging from Herodotus to

Ammianus Marcellinus (although both contain, for example, ethnographic digressions that arguably constitute a form of social history). Nor does it embrace one of the driving forces of modern social history, which is a democratized attempt to tell the story of disempowered groups, although the ancients do occasionally touch on this. Such works do, however, serve to create a generalized ancient cultural history and consequently share something in common with modern social historians.

Tacitus' *Dialogus* could certainly be classified as a social history, something apparent from its very subject and ostensible topic, the decline of oratory. As noted, Tacitus' opening question to Fabius assumes decline. However, Aper's presence soon partially negates that assumption and allows Tacitus to take the discussion to a level of sophistication that would not otherwise be possible and adds a layer of complexity, in part through having Aper interject certain ethical conundrums into the discussion. In addition, Aper is deeply self-aware of the cultural dynamics that drive the elite. Maternus, on the other hand, challenges and questions basic social assumptions (though he can never entirely escape them himself) set forth by Aper and, presumably, also accepted by the other interlocutors. While clearly not identical to modern social history (the Romans lacked, for example, any scientific form of demographics or statistics to support such studies), still there is an elemental understanding on the part of Maternus and Aper that basic cultural assumptions and beliefs are worth addressing.

It bears noting that the social often coincides with the political; indeed, political explanations for oratory's decline sandwich the entire discussion, acting as a framework for the dialogue. The confluence of the two need not concern us; as numerous social historians have come to understand, the political and the social are frequently not easy to separate, and as Levene has noted (2004, 160), the nexus of the political, the literary, and the social here creates a complex web of associations (on the inseparability of the social and political in the context of social history, see Stearns 2003, 12–13). Nor ought we to be concerned with the fragmented nature of the discussion, which covers a range of topics: the contemporary political scene, pedagogical practices, courtroom procedure, the nature of patronage at the time, rhetorical styles and audience expectation, literary history and the historical frameworks in which oratory flourished – on the whole, the work covers a large area whose diverse parts give us, collectively, a window into the Roman social scene as perceived by a small elite group that came to maturity under the Julio-Claudians, lived through the civil wars of 69, and were now coming together in the middle of Vespasian's reign to take stock of something they deemed of

significant social value and which clearly remained so a quarter of a century later when Tacitus wrote the work.

3. The Literary Form

A number of literary genres encompassed social history, and a discussion of the form Tacitus chose is important, in no small part because the literary form itself and its style drive the characterization and arguments within the work. Indeed, the work's style, given its subject, constitutes a statement in and of itself about contemporary rhetoric. The dialogue form was initially one in which Greek authors explored rhetorical and philosophical questions, and, among Roman authors, Cicero most famously took up and continued this tradition with works such as the *de Oratore* (which discussed the education of the ideal orator), the *de Republica* (which discussed the creation of the ideal state), and the *Brutus* (which is part literary history, part autobiography). Cicero, as was the case with Tacitus, was a master of the form (which he tells us he took over from Plato and Aristotle, *Att.* 4.16.3), and his influence in several key areas looms large over the *Dialogus*, as does the influence of his Greek predecessors.

Direct Greek influence is not surprising, for Tacitus elsewhere explicitly expresses his admiration for Plato (*Ann.* 6.6.1). Of course, Plato's *Phaedo* and his accompanying dialogues – the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, and *Crito* – all established a standard for the dialogue in antiquity since they were all set not long before the death of their major interlocutor, Socrates. The *Dialogus* itself was set around 75 CE, probably just prior to Maternus' death. It is occasioned by the dramatic reading of a tragedy, Maternus' *Cato*, and in this sense has something in common with Plato's *Symposium*, set at the house of the tragic poet Agathon who won first prize at the Lenaea in Athens in 416 BCE (Allison 1999; cf. Rutledge 2000). As is also the case with the *Symposium*, the dialogue is not really a dialogue at all, but a series of set speeches, in this case concerning the state of contemporary oratory. The direct influence of other Platonic dialogues, specifically the *Gorgias* (Egermann 1935) and the *Protagoras* (Voss 1973) have been suggested as well, a quite plausible conjecture, since they explore questions concerning the relationship of rhetoric and the state, as Tacitus does here.

Plato influenced Cicero heavily in the composition of his dialogues. Hence, as Socrates' death looms in several of Plato's works, Scipio Aemilianus Numantinus' death hovers over the *de Republica*, L. Crassus' (*inter alios*) over the *de Oratore*, and Cato the Elder's over the

de Senectute, while the *Brutus* itself is occasioned by the death of Cicero's rival in oratorical skill, Hortensius. Present, too, in Ciceronian dialogue are numerous intertextual references to Plato: to cite but one example, in the *Republic* Plato has Thrasymachus, a name meaning "bold in battle," make a harsh argument for the rights of the powerful over the weak. Similarly, one of the interlocutors in Cicero's *de Republica*, Furius or "the rager," is forced to take up a devil's advocate argument for the rights of the powerful (2.70). It is very likely that Tacitus had in mind a similar playfulness in bestowing on Aper ("the wild boar," see Edwards 2008 for discussion) the part of advocating an argument on behalf of modern oratory, and in the process citing as examples of its benefits Vibius Crispus and Eprius Marcellus, two powerful but notorious *delatores* (orators who specialized in violent prosecution) under Nero who retained their power under Vespasian (see Rutledge 2001, 225–228, 278–282). In addition, Cicero's interlocutors are always the foremost statesmen and orators of the day, and this is no less true for Tacitus. Another feature that looks back in particular to Ciceronian dialogue is the play between accuracy and distance. That is to say, the writer purports to distance himself temporally from the conversation by setting it in the past (possibly in the interest of an "objective" presentation), yet at the same time asserts the veracity of the actual conversation as it is recalled either by himself or by one who is reporting it.

Ciceronian influence is further evident when Tacitus' work turns to the history and evolution of oratory in the speeches of Aper and Messalla, while the *de Oratore*, which attempted to construct the ideal orator, influences Messalla's opinions about the current state of Roman education. Now it was something of a trend among Roman authors that the founding figure of a particular genre in Latin (or the first to adapt a Greek genre to Latin) was also the one whose style tended to loom large over authors who subsequently chose to work in the same genre. Hence, for example, Cato the Elder's influence is readily felt in Sallust (see Levene 2000; both in turn influenced, stylistically, Tacitus' historical works). Because Cicero was, in a sense, the "founding father" of Roman dialogue, Ciceronian style tends to influence Tacitus' work (see Mayer 2001, 27–31). We can best get a sense of this through a close look at his style in the *Dialogus* by considering the following passage from one of the opening chapters:

Nam postero die quam Curiatius Maternus Catonem recitauerat, cum offendisse potentium animos diceretur, tamquam in eo tragoediae argumento sui oblitus tantum Catonem cogitasset, eaque de re per urbem frequens sermo haberetur, uenerunt ad eum M. Aper et Iulius Secundus, celeberrima tum ingenia fori nostri, quos ego utrosque non modo in iudiciis studiose

audiebam, sed domi quoque et in publico adsectabar mira studiorum cupiditate et quodam ardore iuuenili, ut fabulas quoque eorum et disputationes et arcana semotae dictionis penitus exciperem: quamuis maligne plerique opinarentur nec Secundo promptum esse sermonem et Aprum ingenio potius et u naturae quam institutione et litteris famam eloquentiae consecutum.

(Dial. 2.1)

For on the day after Maternus had recited his *Cato*, when he was said to have offended the sentiments of the powerful, as if he had thought only of Cato and in the subject of the tragedy had forgotten himself, with there being much talk about the matter in the city, M. Aper and Julius Secundus paid him a visit, then the most renowned talents of our forum, both of whom I used not only to listen to in the courts of law, but also followed at home and in public with a marvelous desire of my studies and with a certain youthful ardor, so that their discussions and debates and the secrets of their familiar conversations I might absorb deeply, although very many maliciously thought that Secundus did not have a rhetorical style that was quick to the draw, and that Aper obtained his reputation for eloquence by native talent and the force of nature rather than by instruction and letters.

The first thing we note is the length of the sentence. Here I have excerpted only fourteen out of the full nineteen lines of the Oxford Classical Text. The main clauses of the sentence are in fact quite brief: *Nam postero die quam Curiatius Maternus Catonem recitauerat ... uenerunt ad eum M. Aper et Iulius Secundus* (“For on the day after Maternus had recited his *Cato* ... M. Aper and Julius Secundus paid him a visit”). Everything else is subordinated to these two clauses. It is a very long, hypo-tactical sentence with numerous agglutinative subordinate clauses of the sort we might expect to find in Cicero. In addition, the language is very concrete, with the sense of every clause made absolutely clear and lucid – again a type of limpid prose we come to expect, for the most part, from Cicero. Virtually every clause has a verb in its proper mood, with little left for the reader to fill in, and the only omission of a verb is with *consecutum* in the last clause. There is, moreover, a wonderful equilibrium to the clauses of this sentence, as we find, for example, in the relative clause, *quos ego utrosque non modo in iudiciis studiose audiebam, sed domi quoque et in publico adsectabar* (“both of whom I used not only to listen to in the courts of law, but also followed at home and in public”). The *non modo* (“not only”) is here picked up by the *sed ... quoque* (“but also”) and recalls the sort of balance we find in Cicero’s frequent use of *non*

modo ... sed etiam (“not only ... but also”). Fulsomeness of language and reduplication are further aspects of Ciceronian style we find in this passage, with, for example, the pairing of *mira studiorum cupiditate et quodam ardore iuuenili* (“with a marvelous desire of my studies and with a certain youthful ardor”). Tacitus also uses a comparative pairing of which Cicero was also fond in the phrase *Aprum ingenio potius et ui naturae quam institutione et litteris famam eloquentiae consecutum* (“Aper obtained his reputation for eloquence by native talent and the force of nature rather than by instruction and letters”). Only one aspect of what we might associate with “typical” Tacitean style emerges, though not in a particularly striking fashion, and that is his use of abstract language – particularly his use of substantives, which here include *potentium*, *arcana*, and *plerique*. The passage on the whole is of a very different style from that which we find in his historical works, which are full of compact, difficult phrasing, and contorted syntax (concerning Tacitus’ style in his historical works see Benario and Master in this volume).

It should be noted that Tacitus’ ability to master a style suited to Cicero and to Sallust (in his historical works) is remarkable, but also not necessarily surprising. Sallust and Cicero were two of the most studied authors in antiquity by the elite class, and Tacitus will have been intimate with both. What is noteworthy is his ability to have mastered their styles so effectively and turned them into something all his own. That education was so heavily based on Cicero in particular brings us to the subject of the dialogue *per se* and gives us an important clue concerning why Tacitus wrote this work (concerning Tacitus’ notions on education and the orator, see Murphy’s fine discussion, 1991). Oratory and rhetoric served as the basis for Roman education; they were also the way a young man could initially make his mark in the world (something Vipstanus Messalla notes, 34.7). We recall that Cicero made his first real splash on the political scene by his defense of Roscius (constituting an indirect challenge to the dangerous warlord Sulla) and his prosecution against Verres. His contemporary, Caesar, lost his case against a prominent noble (Dolabella) and was obliged to undertake further study with professors of rhetoric in the East. Oratory’s importance abided into the empire, hence Tacitus’ and Pliny’s concerns with rhetoric, indicated by Tacitus’ mention in his historical works of talents such as Domitius Afer (*Ann.* 4.52.1) and Galerius Trachalus (*Hist.* 1.90.2), as well as the rhetorical abilities of individual emperors (*Ann.* 13.3); equally tell-tale is Quintilian’s work and position as imperial tutor (*Inst.* 4 pref. 2). Consequently, the possibility of oratory’s decline, for some Romans, implied a challenge to senatorial *dignitas* if not even *auctoritas* and merited further exploration.

4. Round One: Patronage and Prestige

Aper (5.3–10) and Maternus (11–13) are the first to speak and, instead of decline, they discuss rather the social and political conditions that attend the profession of the contemporary orator and poet. The two speeches in fact constitute a clash in worldviews, for Aper maintains a much more traditional opinion concerning oratory than does Maternus. Aper's argument is of particular interest, since it gives us a glimpse into the mind-set and rationalizations of those who were willing to serve the power structures and institutions in the early imperial period of which Tacitus himself was so critical and mistrustful in his historical works. It bears noting, however, that Tacitus too was forced to function within the same system and to make his own compromises and gives a more sympathetic portrayal of Aper than had once been supposed (Champion 1994). Rather than reading his character as deliberately abrasive or acting as devil's advocate, we should perhaps understand him as a realist's perspective on Roman politics; indeed, Aper's views are rather conservative.

The assumption at the base of his argument is one that had always attended oratory and been a part of Roman politics in general: a man of talent amongst the elite takes up oratory because it adds to his *dignitas*, his *fama*, and is geared toward *utilitas*. At base it is an ideology that a politically active life is best, that one aspires to as much power as one's talent will allow, and that one even has an obligation, provided one has the capacity, to do just that. Perfecting one's rhetorical talents and abilities makes one's political survival more secure and assists attacks on political enemies when necessary (emphasized elsewhere in Tacitus' historical works, as, for example, in the case of C. Silanus who, *orandi nescius*, "ignorant of speaking," swiftly falls to a charge of provincial maladministration, *Ann.* 3.66–67). The skilled orator protects the weak and can get entire provinces under his wing. His house is full of even the most renowned men who seek his protection. One can easily imagine Cicero or any number of orators of the early empire nodding in assent, based not only on their own words but on their careers as well (indeed, Aper may be indebted to Cicero for this perspective; Goldberg 1999, 229–230). In the republican period and continuing into the empire, an accomplished orator could make his mark and become a statesman, who, by virtue of his skill (as opposed simply to magisterial office), could become very powerful politically.

Tacitus himself likely rose through his rhetorical talent, taking his place in a long Roman tradition of men such as Hortensius, Cicero, and others. At one point Aper notes that oratory also brings the advantage that it can elevate even *noui homines* to the peak of Roman

success, no doubt a not-so-subtle comparison to Cicero, a new man from Arpinum who, propelled by his rhetorical abilities, had broken into the ranks of republican grandees. It is hard not to imagine that Tacitus, himself likely from Gallia Narbonensis, was paying himself a back-handed compliment, particularly given his own career trajectory, and that he would have felt some solidarity with Aper.

However, Aper then hits what for some scholars seems a major flaw in his argument (a view Goldberg has recently summed up and challenged, 1999, 227–229). For his examples of successful contemporary orators, he cites two Neronian *delatores*, Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus, both of whom continued to be important and powerful under Vespasian – indeed, Crispus was even a part of Domitian’s inner circle. Yet these examples are less troublesome, from a rhetorical standpoint, than they first appear: central to Aper’s argument is their dubious moral character, as well as their low birth and their other character flaws in general, despite which they have come to be among the most important members of Vespasian’s court, examples that in fact support his contention that oratory could still take one quite far (see Luce 1993, 36). Eprius may have eventually fallen from grace, but that was an assumed risk for the ambitious in Roman politics. Neither we nor Tacitus need to like Eprius or Vibius, that is not the point. The point is, rather, power, and specifically the influence an orator was expected to earn politically; while the political focus had changed from competition among the elite during the late republic to rivalry for prestigious recognition from the *princeps* under the early empire, the social dynamic that demanded a man earn prestige had not, and oratory was one of the central vehicles for earning it. True, a myriad of *delatores* parade throughout Tacitus’ *Annals* and *Histories*, and we know what Tacitus thought of them. Yet while we might dislike what Rudich (1985) rightly referred to as an “accommodation to a corrupt reality,” we also know that it was the sort of accommodation Tacitus himself had made and understood. Aper’s discussion, therefore, stands in the context of the sort of compromise we find candidly acknowledged in the *Agricola* (45.1; see Mayer 2001, 5, for the relationship between careerism in the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus*).

What Tacitus has done through Aper is to cast into relief a shift in Roman social dynamics. The cultural demands to which the ruling class had become habituated over centuries of republican governance, in particular values of prestige and competition, were renegotiated and redirected with the advent of the principate. Senators ceased to be on the top of the ruling hierarchy and now found themselves the clients of a single powerful patron, the *princeps*, on whom senators depended to advance their careers (as Tacitus himself tells us, *Hist.*

1.1). This new state of affairs proved occasionally awkward, since it required senators, previously at the top of the Roman social hierarchy, to defer to imperial freedmen or to powerful women of the ruling house, such as Livia, Messalina, or Agrippina the Younger. In short, Aper is a realist about how a senator now must function and survive if he is to play his part as a loyal and effective client to that ultimate of patrons, the emperor, but also himself act as a patron to the less powerful. The role of patron was a long-standing one in Roman society for senators and viewed from this perspective means that Aper is here arguing in a sense for the *status quo*.

Maternus tries mightily to counter Aper's argument that oratory brings greater prestige than poetry, an opinion, given Maternus' confrontational stance, riddled with contradictions that numerous scholars have tried in particular to resolve (see Williams 1978, 32–35; Luce 1993, 27–33; Bartsch 1994, 102–107). Some of these contradictions are immediately apparent: Maternus first rejects Aper's utilitarian and materialistic arguments but then proceeds to argue that poets can indeed receive lucrative remuneration. He objects that he is not interested in political power but also recalls how his poetry brought about the downfall of the odious Vatinius, whom Tacitus was later to call "the vilest creature of Nero's court" (*Ann.* 15.34.2), and, in a related fashion, speaks disingenuously of longing for the "woods and groves" while he has at the same time just published a confrontational tract against the imperial court and promises more (specifically, his *Thyestes*, *Dial.* 3.3). Moreover, as Goldberg has noted (1999, 229), he creates a false choice: either a man of standing follows bloody eloquence or chooses the more ethical and "safer" path of poetry. The only real point Maternus scores here is his argument *sub specie aeternitatis* (especially if students in contemporary universities are a guide) that people prefer to read Homer to Demosthenes, Euripides and Sophocles to Lysias and Hyperides, and Vergil to Cicero. This is not to say that Maternus' arguments against a public career are inaccurate or morally incorrect in their entirety, only that they are remarkable for one of his class and clearly disturbing to his fellow interlocutors. Indeed, the very reason for their presence, in addition to his provocative poetry, is his professed intent not to participate any longer in public life (*ac iam me deiungere a forensi labore constitui*, "but now I've decided to divorce myself from the toils of the forum," 11.2), a decision that could conceivably carry legal ramifications in Roman antiquity (see Rutledge 2001, 117). The only valid point Maternus really makes is his remarking on the dangers for orators, such as Eprius Marcellus, who get entangled in affairs at court and live on a slippery slope, although he finds himself entangled in the same web as a result of his poetic productions which attack the powerful. While he

brings out Saleius Bassus as an example of what modern poetry could achieve in his own defense (and in the defense of modern poetry in general), he is on much stronger ground when he remarks the prestige accorded to Vergil and to a number of lesser poets under the Julio-Claudians, although the mention of Ovid, given his fate, does not further his argument. This is not to wholly denigrate or underrate Maternus' response. As numerous scholars have noted, there is much more to Maternus' speech than this (including his artful use of poetic language; see Levene 2004, 165–166). However, from a purely social standpoint, when one considers his fellow interlocutors and the values of his fellow senators, his counter-arguments to Aper in his first speech would not likely carry much weight. The result, arguably, is simply to highlight the strength of his opponent's rebuke.

5. Round Two: Education, Style, and Culture

After Vipstanus' brief interruption, Aper picks up the thread of the discussion once again and delivers a long speech (chapters 16–23) in defense of modernism, which concludes with a somewhat lengthy criticism of Cicero. He first delivers a long *praefatio*, which is an argument over the definition of a modern as opposed to an ancient orator. He then goes on to give what has sometimes been referred to as a literary history but could also be read as a comparative assessment of styles among Roman orators in which he notes not an evolution of styles, but a change in them according to the time (18.2). He further notes that it is the fault of men to praise that which is older and to be critical of the present, noting that even Cato and Cicero in their day had their share of critics and that Cicero himself was critical of some of his contemporaries. All of this is intended to support Aper's argument that contemporary audience expectations frequently drive the orator's style (also see Levene 2004, 175–179 for a good discussion of the aesthetic values that govern Aper's argument).

Aper is arguably sensitive to fundamental social and political changes in Roman society, in particular when he notes the changing style of Latin over time. He recognizes language as something dynamic. As a modern American audience would not tolerate the lengthy and complex Lincoln–Douglas style debate of 150 years ago, so a Roman audience, equally distant in Tacitus' day from Cicero, would not tolerate a speech in the Ciceronian style. He cites as an example Cassius Severus, a man known for his bitter invective (which, in fact, landed him in exile under Augustus), and in doing so remarks

uidit namque ... cum condicione temporum et diuersitate aurium formam quoque ac speciem orationis esse mutandam (“for he saw ... with the circumstances of the times and the diversity of listeners that the form and shape of a speech had to be changed,” 19.2). Aper also astutely notes why style changed: by Cassius’ time rhetorical devices that had seemed novel to previous generations were well-trodden territory, and the audience demanded something more.

What has been termed Aper’s “defense of modernism” is not so much a defense as an understanding that style is fluid, and in this he is surely correct. Any classical scholar recognizes that epic did not stop with Ennius but changed in the hands of Lucretius, Vergil, and those who came later such as Lucan and Valerius Flaccus. Style was ever in flux, influenced by the orator’s audience and changing tastes. Aper therefore astutely notes that a Ciceronian or a still more antiquarian style would no more be tolerated than would Roscius’ or Turpio’s old-fashioned style of acting. The display of learning, bits of philosophy, rhetorical precepts, all of this was now passé; what was wanted was the décor of more relatively modern poets, such as Horace, Vergil, or Lucan. *Sententiae* were also desired – i.e., brief, pithy remarks akin to our soundbites which Tacitus himself employed to great, sometimes devastating, effect throughout his works (such as in his succinct and damning remark summarizing Galba’s life, *et omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset*, “and by the consent of all capable of empire had he not been emperor,” *Hist.* 1.49.4). Aper notes several key orators, including Calvus, Caesar, Asinius Pollio, and Cicero, whose styles were such as would prove unpleasing to a modern audience. He concludes by assailing those whose preference is for earlier Roman literati such as Lucilius, Lucretius, Sisenna, Varro, and Calvus, while eschewing Vergil, Horace, Aufidius Bassus, or Servilius Nonianus (23.2).

It should be noted that Aper is not against the ancients *per se*; rather he is implicitly critical of those who rely on them too much, since he politely notes at the conclusion of his speech that his fellow interlocutors avoid the pitfalls of excess antiquarianism in their literary compositions and oratory. Aper’s discussion stands in the context of Roman discussions of antiquarianism and style in general; Tacitus notes elsewhere in his writings that not everything modern should be eschewed and remarks that his own age possessed virtue and talent (*Ann.* 3.55.5), an observation likely motivated by the popularity of more antique authors in Tacitus’ own day. Indeed, we may use the analogy of artistic styles in ancient Rome to compare it to Tacitus’ own literary style, which drew on both the old and the new. In a single programmatic display, such as in the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine, art objects from the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and

contemporary periods all stood side by side and created an amalgam that was particular to the Age of Augustus. Similarly, the influence of Archaic authors such as Cato, or subsequently of Augustan authors such as Sallust and Vergil, as well as the modern sententious or pointed style are all detectable throughout Tacitus' prose. Aper's argument is not for a rejection of ancient authors – that would be unthinkable, since Roman education based itself on a canon of writers stretching back to Ennius that inevitably influenced literary style. Moreover, Aper's extended criticism of Cicero is itself a response to just how vital Cicero was to Roman education in his day, epitomized in Quintilian's reliance on and admiration of his rhetoric.

Roman education is a subject that plays a more explicit role in Messalla's response to Aper, and some have detected in it the influence of Quintilian's lost *de Causis Corruptae Eloquentiae* (Barwick 1954, 8–18; Brink 1989). First, though, Messalla addresses the subject of the ancients. He confesses that he is not fond of ancient orators such as Laelius and Servius Galba, but if he had to choose, he much prefers the eloquence of a L. Crassus or of a C. Gracchus to that of a Maecenas or of a Gallio (on Messalla's view on orators see Fantham 1978a, who argues that Cicero's shadow here looms large). His main criticism in the first stage of his argument against moderns (26.1–3) is that their oratory is more suited for singing and dancing (*cantare saltarique*), that is, to the theater (*quo plerique ... actores ita utuntur*), rendering it something feminine (*ne virilis quidem*) and lacking in the gravity appropriate to an orator (*leuitate sententiarum ... histrionales modos exprimant*; see Bartsch 1994, 100–101, for the further significance of this image; cf. Levene 2004, 181–183). He then concedes Aper's point about Severus, though he condemns his harsh style only to criticize Aper on the grounds that, apart from Cassius, he refused to cite any other modern orators of good repute, and, taking the gloves off, he proposes to name names to investigate those parties responsible for oratory's decline (26.8). Maternus intervenes and brings him back to the subject at hand, asking him to explain the causes for the decline of eloquence rather than play the blame game.

Messalla now sets out a lengthy analysis of the root causes of decline (chapters 28–32): “the indolence of young people, parental neglect, the ignorance of teachers, and the forgetfulness of ancient morality” (*desidia iuuentutis et neglegentia parentum et inscientia praecipientium et obliuione moris antiqui*, 28.2). He then proceeds to give a rather rosy view of how ancient Romans were raised, citing as examples the Gracchi and Augustus, who were reared under the close guidance of their mothers. Now, complains Messalla, children are handed over to Greek pedagogues of dubious character and acculturated to license and insolence (*lasciuiiae et dicacitati*, 29.2),

while the young are obsessed with games and the theater (29.3), and teachers lack rigor (29.4). He then argues that there has been a general decline in the curriculum. The major disciplines once deemed necessary for an orator's education (such as music, geometry, grammar, dialectic, and philosophy) and noted as such by Cicero, have been supplanted instead by rhetorical exercises and declamation, which has (implicitly) also overthrown the study of ethics and history by which the young learn about human nature (31.1–4).

Luce (1993, 20–21, 34) has pointed out that Messalla's view is one that in fact constitutes an amalgam of a world that never was, as he cobbles together an assemblage of impressions based on a Ciceronian ideal expressed in the *Orator* and *de Oratore*, not one grounded in contemporary reality. Brink (1989, 484–494) proposed that Messalla's Ciceronianism also needs viewing through the filter of Quintilian, while more recently Levene (2004, 184) has noted that this is not trite complaining on the part of Messalla and that Messalla has in fact created a complex nexus between intellectual activity and the Roman social structure. In Messalla's view, Cicero was the ideal for which to aim but no longer is even a target, and he goes on to note that the audience has an instinctive feel as to whether or not a speaker has been thoroughly instructed in his craft. He further laments that all the traditional instruction so vital to oratory has been driven out in favor of the soundbite, reflecting Aper's remarks about modern oratory and its audience. However, while Aper sought to embrace audience demands, Messalla is more critical (32.4).

Maternus interrupts him and notes that that is not all there is to the story and pushes Messalla to go deeper in assessing the reason for decline, demanding that he explain not so much the intellectual training that has failed modern oratory, since this is well established. Instead, Maternus remarks that, since oratory is very much a matter of facility and practice (*facilitate et usu*), an explanation concerning the failure of both is warranted. Messalla offers as one possible explanation the desuetude of the former custom whereby young men were mentored by more senior statesmen and groomed for public life (34.1–3). Once upon a time a young man was taken under the wing of an experienced orator or statesman and learned at his knee the ropes of the practical application of oratory and rhetoric. He was present at Senate meetings or in the law courts and thereby gained practical knowledge of his audience. In short, he learned from genuine experience as opposed to the artificial atmosphere of the classroom, and Messalla cites as examples of those trained and prepared in such a way, *inter alios*, L. Crassus, Julius Caesar, and Asinius Pollio, all of whom at a young age were ready to undertake (even if not always successfully) their first court cases. Messalla's opinions have

sometimes been read as absolutist, though they are arguably impressionistic and intended to be so to provide Tacitus' readers with a general argument concerning decline in his day. Doubtless we need to be wary of Messalla's argument about just how far into abeyance the practice of apprenticing had gone (see Williams 1978, 45; Levene 2004, 193–195). Tacitus is, after all, present in this very capacity as a young man; Pliny, who was in a position to know, notes that young men were still taken under the wings of Roman statesmen (*Ep.* 2.14.2–10), including by Tacitus himself (*Ep.* 4.13), much in the same way that Mucius Augur had acted as a mentor to the young Cicero (*Amic.* 1), and Quintilian also states that it was still a part of contemporary practice (*Inst.* 10.5.19). That does not mean, however, that Messalla is wrong, and that it was, at least seemingly, a less common practice in his day, though we cannot be certain.

Similarly, Messalla goes on to lament the rise of the rhetorical schools, and we could read his complaint as indicating that these are merely taking precedence as opposed to displacing a common practice wholesale. He particularly targets the use of *suasoriae* and *controversiae* (35.4), something that conceivably speaks to Tacitus' balance of presentation, since he himself applied such exercises to great effect in his historical writings, such as (perhaps most famously) in the funeral of Augustus in which he issues a damning historical assessment of the first *princeps* (*Ann.* 1.9–10). Indeed, the very speeches of the *Dialogus* structure the work very much in the nature of a *controversia* (Luce 1993, 28–29). Such practices, argues Messalla (35.5), leave pupils woefully unprepared for the reality of Roman legal and political life (perhaps a playfully ironic remark on Tacitus' part, given his career, his reputation as an orator, and the structure of the *Dialogus*). All of this is presented, at least at the time of the work's composition, just a few years after Quintilian had published his treatise on the instruction of the orator, a work that drew heavily on Ciceronian theory and which mirrors Messalla's own conservatism (although some might even consider him reactionary). However, Quintilian embraced contemporary talents; the overall impression of Messalla is one whose overly generalized views do not always withstand a comparative scrutiny of the more complex contemporary social or political scene.

6. Round Three: Historical Assessments

The conclusion of Messalla's speech is lost, and we resume after Maternus has already started the last speech of the work (36–41),

which is a historically based analysis concerning decline, the gist of which is twofold. The changed political reality of the principate has transformed the socio-political dynamics around which oratory flourishes, and the political conditions of the republic were such that they promoted greater competition among the elite of which oratory and rhetoric were key components. Maternus notes the political factions, the personal enmities, the social conflicts that gave oratory fertile ground. Through oratory one could obtain *honores* and *auctoritas*, foreign clients and magistracies (36.4–5). Perhaps his most compelling argument is that the sheer magnitude of the defendants and their court cases gave rise to great eloquence, remarking that speeches about electoral corruption (*de ambitu comitorum*), the fleecing of provincials (*de expilatis sociis*), and the murder of citizens (*ciuibus trucidatis*) made for great oratory. Such trials still occurred, but in what was on the whole a more stable political context under the principate.

Maternus' argument is borne out by the historical and literary record. Cicero's defense of Archias and Milo, his orations against Verres, Catiline, and Marc Antony: this is the stuff of great rhetoric, and these speeches are among the greatest pieces of Roman literature, although we lack any prosecutorial speech from the empire by men of noted reputation. Maternus concedes, however, that it is better not to have the conditions under which such oratory arises (37.4–7). Moreover, the socio-political context is now too constrained for such oratory, locked into the small venue of the centumviral court with its minute rules that further constrict oratory. The judges, even the manner of dress (39.1–3), now have confined something that needs more space (physically and politically) to achieve greatness.

He further remarks that once upon a time a much greater audience was at hand to hear the likes of Cicero plead cases such as the *Pro Milone* (39.5), feeding the orator's rhetoric. Indeed, men actively sought enmities by attacking great men, adding fuel to the orator's fire. We can quibble with Maternus on some points. Prosecutions could no doubt offer powerful and exciting (albeit lethal) venues for Roman oratory, as we see in a number of instances in Tacitus (such as the case of Barea Soranus, *Ann.* 16.30–33), or in the political turmoil of 69 CE (e.g., *Hist.* 4.6–11). Moreover, Pliny's letters indicate a sometimes vibrant and electric atmosphere at the centumviral courts (e.g., *Ep.* 2.14.10). Yet in the end Maternus may be right. We must set Cicero against others whose works no longer survive and may no longer survive for a reason. Domitius Afer, Cassius Severus, Eprius Marcellus, Galerius Trachalus, and Julius Secundus were noted orators in their day, but, apart from brief excerpts such as Eprius' repartee with Helvidius Priscus in Tacitus' *Histories* (4.6–8), none of their

speeches survives. Instead, for the early empire we are left with Claudius' speech on the Gauls and Pliny's *Panegyricus* – not a promising body of work.

The final portion of Maternus' speech (40.1–41.5) is perhaps the most revealing and in a sense takes us back to the *Dialogus*' opening chapters. He there notes that in well-ordered states one will not find great oratory, a critique of Cicero's observation that oratory is in fact the product of orderly governance (*Brut.* 45; see Bartsch 1994, 110–112, for discussion). It is the product of Athenian democracy or of republican Rome; it is not found in places such as Sparta or, more pointedly, Macedonia and Persia (Bartsch 1994, 111–112; Heldmann 1982, 281). Monarchy does not allow for great oratory, and for their own society there is no longer any need: *quid enim opus est longis in senatu sententiis cum optimi cito consentient? quid multis apud populum contionibus cum de re publica non imperiti et multi deliberant sed sapientissimus et unus?* (“Why are lengthy opinions needed in the Senate when all the best men are quickly of the same mind? What need for many meetings before the people when it is not the ignorant multitude deliberating but the wisest man alone?” 41.4). On one level Maternus' remarks address a new reality for the orator, and a stark one. But this is no death knell for Aper's earlier argument, since it ignores the fundamental reality of governance. Laws still need enforcement. Provincials, as Tacitus himself could tell his readers, still needed protection, and Maternus' historical schema, while addressing certain social changes in light of a new political reality, is also oversimplified. Ultimately it was a part of an overall impression concerning the shifting social and political dynamics in Roman society as it went from a republic to an authoritarian dictatorship. The social shift in which politics and patronage were permanently altered had still left some trying to find their way.

7. Epilogue

Scholars have long approached the *Dialogus* in terms of looking for a solution. But read in social or historical terms, there is no real need for viewing it in such riddling terms. The *Dialogus* gives us an exceptional window into the conversation taking place in Tacitus' day over the place of rhetoric in elite life. The very conversation Tacitus relates, for all of its distortions and misrepresentations, gives a wide range of opinions, all of them which, when set in their larger cultural and social context, are each valid in their own way. Certainly the conservatism of Aper, who argues from a very traditional perspective,

was appreciated by senators such as Pliny and Tacitus, who took provinces under their wings and prosecuted malefaction before the emperor. One suspects that Tacitus was also sympathetic to Aper's view that the style and practice of oratory had changed with the time and particularly understanding of his views concerning the sententious style, a hallmark of Tacitean prose (Sinclair 1995).

While Messalla's nostalgia might at times seem idealized, particularly his adherence to the Ciceronian style, this, too, is not so easily dismissed. Messalla's Ciceronianism is a targeted standard, not, as he himself notes, a lived reality. Quintilian himself not only relied heavily on Ciceronian theory but stated that the apex of a student's maturity was an evident appreciation for Ciceronian style and form; it did not, however, create *de facto* a republic filled with Ciceros. While his lament over the indolence and vice of students, poorly trained teachers, and lax parents might seem a well-worn chestnut, Tacitus may have desired to give it voice, either despite or because of its place as a *communis opinio* – *communis opinio*, since Messalla attempts to describe decline in social terms with a distinctly moralizing slant, and this is just the sort of explanation that we find throughout Roman writers (including Sallust, Livy, and Petronius, among numerous others) for the degradation both of rhetoric and of political life. Here the social historian and the political historian intersect in terms of their understanding of causality in general terms, though they admittedly diverge in specifics.

It is Maternus' final speech, however, that brings out the final paradox and contradiction that some Romans of his age faced, whereby Cicero had indeed become a standard, as Maternus' own examples of rhetorical greatness show, but this was at variance with the political atmosphere of the age. Yet that political reality is one that is in a sense constructed by Maternus as a result of his own opposition to the court. Hence for Maternus, Roman social forms and demands collide with political realities, and it is in this respect that Maternus and his two fellow interlocutors most diverge. In the end, however, there is a clash in three worldviews, each of which sees contemporary social and political reality in its own way and formulates an attendant response to it in starkly different terms: radical opposition (Maternus), accommodation (Aper), and a reactionary response in the face of perceived decline (Messalla). Each of these plausibly represents views Tacitus encountered and ruminated, and they play off each other ultimately to form a window into a social world as complex as Tacitus' prose.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For those desiring a detailed commentary on the *Dialogus* there is now Mayer's edition of Tacitus' *Dialogus* (2001), which is very good for its scholarly summation of some basic issues for those coming to the *Dialogus* for the first time, such as the date of the work and Cicero's and Quintilian's influence on it. Bartsch's 1994 study of the *Dialogus* and Juvenal, to which she devotes a chapter of her book, constitutes a particularly engaging discussion of the *Dialogus* in its larger political context and makes for an interesting read when set next to Williams (1978) and Luce (1993); all three are very much concerned about the contradictions inherent in the work and try in their various ways to make sense of them. Williams' work is valuable simply for its contextualizing of the *Dialogus* in discussions on "decline" in Roman literature in general. Rudich's 1985 article is also a good place from which to start for a look at the political context of the work, which, when read in conjunction with Champion's (1994) and Goldberg's (1999) articles on Aper (both of whom are apologists for him), constitutes a lively and diverse perspective on this interesting character. Recently Levene (2004) has set the work in the context of literary history and argues for a more paradoxical understanding of the work, noting in his brief summation that "the form in which the work is written appears to challenge the very analysis that it has developed" (2004, 157). Apart from this, scholarly bibliography cited in the present volume can be divided into four major areas (with some obvious exceptions): the influence of (1) Plato, (2) Cicero, and (3) Quintilian on the work, and (4) the identity of Curiatius Maternus.

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The Histories

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1. Synopsis

The four and a half extant books of the *Histories* chronicle the events of 69 CE and the first months of 70 CE, a brief but action-packed span of time. The work opens on the first of January at the start of the final two weeks of the emperor Servius Galba's reign; his soon-to-be usurper Marcus Otho is a trusted member of his inner circle for the moment. More obvious than Otho's machinations is the rebellion declared in the province of Lower Germany led by legionary commander Aulus Vitellius. Before Vitellius' lieutenants can lead his armies into Italy, though, Otho, overcome by resentment that Galba adopted another man as son and heir, successfully overthrows the aged emperor. Otho has little time to bask in the glow of his position as the Vitellian forces proceed with their invasion of Italy heedless of the identity of the emperor. The decisive battle, rashly engaged in by the Othonian forces, results in a major defeat. Otho, in perhaps the only selfless act of his life, commits suicide in the aftermath. He is the second emperor overthrown in 69 CE and the spring is not yet over. The legionary commander in Judaea, Flavius Vespasianus, persuaded by his wily colleague in Syria Licinius Mucianus, decides to revolt. More than any other emperor of the year, Vespasian is in a strong position. Not only does he have two grown sons and the support of Mucianus, but he also has an aggressive and smart lieutenant in Antonius Primus. Primus drives the Flavian attack all the way to Rome where, in December, after the shameful destruction of the Capitoline temple (and the death of Vespasian's brother), Vitellius is killed and Vespasian becomes undisputed emperor. The year's wars have not yet been concluded, however. Led by the Batavian Julius Civilis, a number of German and Gallic cities and tribes on the northern Rhine

rebel. In the beginning they supposedly operate under a secret alliance with the Flavians but eventually prove to be true rebels seeking freedom from all Roman control. The text breaks off with Civilis seeking a peaceful settlement to the Batavian revolt and the siege of Jerusalem remaining for Vespasian's elder son Titus to oversee.

2. Introduction

The *Histories* is an extended fragment. The original work of (probably) twelve books recounted the years 69–96 CE, from the revolt against Galba through the assassination of Domitian (Syme 1958, 686–687). The slightly more than four books that come down to us along with *Annals* 11–16 in an eleventh-century manuscript, the Second Medicean (or M2), would have comprised only about a third of the work and less than 10 percent of the chronological span (Reynolds 1983, 407–409). Tacitus devotes more than three books and nearly one hundred and fifty pages in the most recent Teubner edition to 69 CE, the so-called year of the four emperors. This detailed treatment of one year is virtually unmatched in Roman historiography save only for certain conflict-ridden late republican years such as 82 BCE or 43 BCE in Livy's history. The brief outline above can only hint at the range of issues and emphases in the *Histories*. Tacitus describes the period narrated by the *Histories* as a “time rich in disasters, bloody from many battles, full of conflict because of political discord, and savage even when there was peace” (*Tempus ... opimum casibus, atrox proeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace saeuum*, 1.2.1). Tacitus' narrative is filled not only with military affairs such as revolts, mutinies, battles, and sieges but also with descriptions of foreign religious practices, senatorial score settling, and imposters of Nero. Incorporated into the *Histories* are also a heavy dose of biography and more diffuse examinations of entire groups of people, including the Praetorian Guard, the senatorial order, the Roman armies, and various provincial communities.

The following pages investigate five aspects of the *Histories* to provide some of the flavor of the work. The first section argues that Tacitus employs a challenging writing style to mirror the façade of the principate and to involve the reader in the process of making judgments about the individuals, events, and institutions in the text. The following section shows how Tacitus diagnoses failure of leadership as one cause for the extraordinary series of civil wars in 69 CE. The civil wars hit rock bottom in Book 3 with the burning of the Capitol but the third section contends that this catastrophe is a natural

end-point of the violence the Roman armies had already directed against provincial and Italian territory in the previous books. The fourth section turns to the structure of the text and suggests that Tacitus does not merely use *annales* to provide an organizing principle for the *Histories* but to examine how different imperial history is from republican. The final section picks up on Tacitus' use of annalistic categories to make the case that when Tacitus explores the state of ethnic identity in the provinces, and in the Batavian revolt in particular, he reveals that the old dynamics of Roman rule no longer reflect the reality of integrated identity in the empire.

3. Style

Tacitus is a notoriously difficult writer to read. Gone is the confident periodic style originally developed by Cicero with its balanced clauses and clearly articulated relationships between ideas (Gotoff 1979, 32–82). The choppy paratactic style of Sallust is the model (Syme 1958, 728–732 and 1964, 240–273). A Tacitean sentence very often gets the main clause out of the way fairly early; suspense is not typically built up to the final position for the verb. It is rather in subordinate clauses or in the appendices Tacitus attaches to his sentences that the text reveals much of the author's insight and from which the reader's pleasure is often derived. The final sentence of Tacitus' introduction of the Flavian general Antonius Primus demonstrates this aspect of his style:

labantibus Vitellii rebus Vespasianum secutus grande momentum addidit, strenuus manu, sermone promptus, serendae in alios inuidiae artifex, discordiis et seditionibus potens, raptor, largitor, pace pessimus, bello non spernendus. (2.86.2)

When Vitellius' fortunes were slipping away, Antonius followed Vespasian and added a great weight to the cause. Primus was a man of action and quick in speech, a craftsman of cultivating ill-will toward others, powerful in periods of discord and mutiny, as happy to steal as to give, the worst kind of man in peace, in war indispensable.

After a small ablative absolute Tacitus dispatches the main clause in just five words, which can be summed up as “Antonius added a lot to the Flavian cause.” The real information and interest in the sentence lie in the twenty-word appendix that explains just why Antonius brought so much to the table. A series of predicate adjectives and nouns and a final gerundive display a variety of figures of speech

and structuring devices including chiasmus, parallelism, and *uariatio*. There are individual moments of balance, for example, *strenuus manu*, *sermone promptus* and *raptor largitor*, but the overall structure of the sentence is unevenly weighted and lacking in harmony.

Tacitus' style defies expectations in structure: anticipating what comes next is not possible. In word choice, poeticisms and archaisms abound. Most of all, Tacitus makes the reader work. Peeling away exteriors and looking below the surface to hidden or obscure meanings is very much a part of the fabric of the *Histories*, like most of Tacitus' writing (O'Gorman 2000, 1–10; Damon 2003, 15). Tacitus uses his style to reinforce and indeed to act out this process of examining the surface for deeper meanings. Clarity is not the goal because certainty and confidence are not easily attained. Tacitus involves the reader in making judgments about meaning, even when he himself is the object of discussion. In the introduction to the *Histories*, Tacitus notionally disavows bias:

dignitatem nostram a Vespasiano inchoatam, a Tito auctam, a Domitiano longius prouectam non abnuerim: sed incorruptam fidem professis neque amore quisquam et sine odio dicendus est. (1.1.3)

I could not deny that my career was begun by Vespasian, advanced by Titus, and carried much further by Domitian. But for those who profess untainted integrity, someone must be spoken of neither with love and without hatred.

Tacitus does not explicitly say that his work is without bias. That claim may be implied between the previous clause "I could not deny ..." and the second one "for those [e.g., such as I] who profess untainted integrity. ..." But instead of making an explicit statement that as a historian he will be unbiased, regardless of his personal experience, he switches from a smooth tricolon that states the benefits he personally received from the Flavians in the first person and active voice to a dense and unbalanced (*neque amore ... sine odio*) passive construction with a dative of agent that refers not to the narrator himself but to whoever professes untainted integrity. His primary historiographical model Sallust sprinkles his disavowal of bias in the *Catiline* with the first person singular and the personal pronoun:

sed a quo incepto studioque me ambitio mala detinuerat, eodem regressus **statui** res gestas populi Romani carptim, ut quaeque memoria digna uidebantur, perscribere, eo magis quod **mihi** a spe metu partibus rei publicae animus liber erat.

(*Sal., Cat. 4.2*)

But having returned to the same undertaking and pursuit from

which my wicked ambition had kept me, I decided to write out in segments the history of the Roman people, whatever seemed worthy of recording. I decided all the more to do this because **my** spirit was free from hope, fear, and partisanship.

Unlike Sallust, Tacitus puts the onus on the reader to decide whether the narrator does indeed speak of the individuals in his *Histories* without bias.

Amidst all of the complexity of the sentences, the hidden meanings, and foiled expectations, one also discovers that Tacitus specializes in epigrammatic one-liners. These expressions, a favorite of the schools of declamation, are pointed, indignant, and damning. About Otho playing to his growing crowd of supporters in the midst of his coup, Tacitus writes: “doing everything slavishly on behalf of gaining absolute power” (*omnia serviliter pro dominatione*, 1.36.3). Likewise Tacitus uses *sententiae* to sum up an individual or group of people. A *sententia* is a particularly pithy expression that can be taken from its context and turned into a more universal statement, such as: “never is power confident enough when it is excessive” (*nec umquam satis fida potentia, ubi nimia est*, 2.92.2). That sentence describes Vitellius but requires no context to be understood. Humor too creeps into Tacitus’ epigrammatic expressions. Perhaps the most famous example is Tacitus’ final thought about Galba: “and by the agreement of everyone he was capable of being emperor, if only he had not been emperor” (*et omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset*, 1.49.4).

Tacitus’ attention to style suggests that he is as much a literary artist as what we might now consider a sober writer of history. Indeed, our modern categories of fiction and history, epic poetry and prose historiography do not exactly correspond to ancient conceptions of literature (Feeney 1991, 250–268). A writer of history could take far more “poetic license” to invent speeches or to include stereotyped accounts of events such as sacks of cities or family members killing each other in civil war than we might now feel is true to events. Like other ancient works of historiography, the *Histories* is a piece of literature that aims to entertain its audience first and foremost (Woodman 1988, 160–167). Even more, historiography is a branch of rhetoric that draws from Homer and Vergil as much as from the *acta senatus*, the official record of senatorial business. One will not find Tacitus’ contribution to literature in the bare narrative of events in the *Histories*, which is not fundamentally dissimilar to parallel accounts (Ash 1999). It is rather Tacitus’ shaping of and perspective on the events of 69–70 CE that merit close attention. The style, the interpretation of the events, their causes, and their meanings are all a product of Tacitus’ unique vision. The following sections will explore a few significant aspects of this vision.

4. Bad Leadership

The outcome of the civil wars of 69 CE was not preordained. Tacitus makes clear time and again that had individuals made different decisions, the results of the fighting could have been different. One of the chief explanations for the prolongation of the military and social mayhem in the *Histories* is a failure of leadership. Tacitus finds constant opportunity to point out or to exemplify the deficient leadership displayed by the emperors and each side's generals in the year's civil wars. Whether it is incompetence, dishonorable double-dealing, or simple carelessness, no commander succeeds in performing his task entirely admirably. Even the closest approximation of a successful general, Petilius Cerialis, who oversees the winding down of the Batavian revolt, is careless in preparing defense-works for his camp and twice misses the start of battle because he had slipped away from camp at night to visit his secret girlfriend (4.77.1 and 5.22.3). Of the numerous examples of failed leadership in the *Histories*, the cases of the emperor Otho and a general Hordeonius Flaccus can be viewed as exemplary.

One of the lessons the *Histories* conveys with Otho's rise and fall is that the very actions one uses to carry out a coup undermine one's authority once he has gained control of the principate. Otho successfully builds a personal backing among troops who are loyal to him but does not also find a way to control their dangerously violent enthusiasm. While Galba and his forces march to Rome, Tacitus describes Otho advancing his personal cause in the ranks by befriending individual soldiers and making occasional disparaging comments about Galba (1.23.1). Otho soon learns that it is quite difficult to reassert discipline, chain of command, and respect for authority after he just broke every rule, law, and taboo regulating the behavior of the military and in his quest to become emperor encouraged the soldiers to do the same. Immediately after the murder of Galba and Otho's ascent to supreme power, Otho's only means of pardoning a blameless Galban is to order him into chains since the new emperor does not have the authority to restrain the violent desires of his troops who want to execute anyone who had the temerity to remain loyal to the previous emperor (1.45.2). Seeing that his men are teetering on the brink of a bloodthirsty rampage, Otho next attempts to placate them by ceding power to them. In this case he allows his troops to choose their own officers and pay (1.46). The ungovernability of the Othonians reaches its apex in an episode late in Book 1 when one of Otho's lieutenants unadvisedly orders weapons to be distributed to a cohort at night (1.80–85). Otho's diehard loyalists in the Praetorian Guard fear that the Senate is planning a coup so they

seize the weapons, kill anyone who opposes them, and rush into a dinner party the emperor is holding in his palace. Every prominent Roman hurries into hiding. A day later, Otho ventures out into the desolate city to address the now calm Praetorians and to attempt to harness more constructively their zeal for him. Otho pleads with the men to leave the planning and thinking to him and his officers; the job of the soldiers is to maintain discipline and do what is ordered because the whole imperial project collapses if they do not: “if it should be permitted for every soldier to ask why he is being ordered, then first obedience dies off and command ceases to exist too (*si cur iubeantur, quaerere singulis liceat, pereunte obsequio etiam imperium intercidit*, 1.83.3). After encouraging and then exploiting a lack of discipline to become emperor, the irony of Otho’s speech is clear even to the emperor himself, who reflects before the speech that “a principate achieved by crime cannot be held by a sudden return of restraint and old-fashioned strictness” (*simul reputans non posse principatum scelere quaesitum subita modestia et prisca gravitate retineri*, 1.83.1). Otho’s problem is not that his support does not run deep (as was the case with Galba), but rather that he is unable to channel his rabid backing into an organized and coordinated force.

Otho has additional difficulties with leadership once he is *princeps*. When it comes time to decide on whether he should risk an engagement with the Vitellians, he mistrusts his most experienced field generals who advise delay. The emperor instead relies for advice on the less knowledgeable tandem of his brother and the prefect of the Praetorian Guard, who encourage him to commit his fortunes to battle (2.31–33). Otho accepts the worse counsel, withdraws from the scene, and leaves his soldiers without their inspiration and the sole figure whom they trust. His suicide after his force’s defeat at the first battle of Bedriacum suggests that he does not know when to quit. If he had figured out how to make better decisions and manage his men’s wild energy in between the beginning and the end, he just might have succeeded as emperor.

Vitellius, who rises from his position as commander of three legions in Upper Germany on the Rhine, is far more inept than his predecessor, Otho. Since he is the son of a very accomplished father, Vitellius need show only the slightest interest in becoming emperor to be acclaimed (1.9.1 and 1.56.2–3). The decision-making and fighting he leaves to his lieutenants and the soldiers. When the Flavian attack is approaching Rome and Vitellius must actually command his forces, he is unprepared, anxious, and frequently drunk (3.56.2).

It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the year’s wars are caused and prolonged solely by the emperors’ lack of leadership. The lower levels of commanders are just as self-seeking and incompetent.

The aged and infirm commander of the legions of Lower Germany, Hordeonius Flaccus, is the most extreme example of the feeble attempts to assert control over dangerously insubordinate and aggressive civil war troops. Tacitus uses the story of Hordeonius Flaccus (as told across the first four books) to highlight how intractable the legions had become and how desperately their actions called out for strong leadership. Indecisive and risk-averse, Hordeonius is not the man for the job.

Tacitus portrays Hordeonius in an unflattering light right from the start by stating that he is old and enfeebled by gout, and as a result the army under his command does not respect him (1.9.1). Hordeonius' physical infirmity and lack of mettle as a commander make any explicit punning on his cognomen Flaccus, "Softy," too obvious to be necessary (Mankin 1995, 239–240). Hordeonius' actions justify the soldiers' disdain. He fails as a commander because he thinks about his personal safety first (1.56.1), because he is indecisive (4.19.2–3), and because, when he does make decisions, they are bad (1.54.2). Like Otho, Hordeonius cedes power over decision-making to his troops in a self-defeating attempt to calm their violent energy (4.25.2). Hordeonius never makes the best decision or takes charge. But much of what makes Hordeonius' job so challenging and why his faults are so brutally exposed is that the legions of Upper Germany are not merely powerful but have been restless and angry (*solliciti et irati*) ever since Galba recalled to Rome their previous commander, Lucius Verginius Rufus, who led the suppression of the Vindex Revolt (1.8.2). Because of his success in Gaul and popularity with his men, Verginius would have been a hard act to follow for any commander, but Hordeonius is particularly ill-equipped. In the end, after one last pathetic attempt to calm the soldiers by giving in the name of Vespasian a donative sent by Vitellius before his death, Hordeonius is dragged from his tent and murdered by his own troops (4.36.2).

Regardless of how ineffective these generals and emperors are, Tacitus employs a strongly moralizing disapproval for their murder. About Galba's end Tacitus offers a simile comparing the final moments of the emperor's life to the assassination of Parthian kings: "Then Roman soldiers proceeded with the intention to slaughter their own emperor, a defenseless old man, as though they were about to drive Vologaeses or Pacorus from the ancestral throne of the Arsacids" (*Igitur milites Romani, quasi Vologaesum aut Pacorum auito Arsacidarum solio depulsuri ac non imperatorem suum inermem et senem trucidare pergerent*, 1.40.2). The simile opens up the possibility, uncomfortable for the Roman audience, that the principate is in fact comparable to eastern monarchy, which since the time of Herodotus had conjured up images of absolute rulers and subjects treated as slaves. Tacitus

strengthens the thought by engaging with the murder of proto-eastern king Priam by Achilles' son Neoptolemus at *Aeneid* 2.506–558 (Pagán 2006, 208–210). In the *Aeneid* and *Histories*, the authors emphasize the old age of the rulers, who are then slaughtered in violent circumstances much more befitting young warriors. Tacitus (1.41.3) directly alludes to Priam's death in the *Aeneid* by applying the word “*truncus*” to Galba's corpse as Vergil does to that of the Trojan king (*Aeneid* 2.557). The tone of the passage expresses outrage over the murder of Galba, an act as unholy as Neoptolemus' murder of Priam, and thereby insists that this practice is not Roman but rather is the product of a temporary loss of a sense of purpose among the soldiers.

5. Collapse of Soldiers' Sense of Mission

Late in the third book after the Flavian forces have closed in on Rome, after a Vitellian defeat has become inevitable and after Vitellius has unsuccessfully attempted to abdicate, the emperor's forces in the city blockade some Flavians, including the future emperor Domitian and Vespasian's brother, Flavius Sabinus, in the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the Capitoline Temple. A crazed and disorganized assault ensues; the Flavians use roof tiles as missiles and toppled religious statues as defense-works (3.71.1–2). Someone, Tacitus does not confirm who, sets fire to the temple and burns it down. The destruction of the Capitol is the culmination of the civil wars and even more the nadir of Roman history: “This deed is the most grievous and disgraceful thing to happen to the state of the Roman people since the foundation of the City” (*Id facinus post conditam Urbem luctuosissimum foedissimumque rei publicae populi Romani accidit*, 3.72.1). Tacitus follows by stating that no foreign enemy had ever been able to do what the Romans had now done to themselves and, it must be admitted, had also done once before in the time of Sulla (3.72.1). The Capitol, burnt to the ground like some insignificant fort, is the symbolic center of the Roman world and the guarantee of the empire.

The destruction of the Capitol does not come out of nowhere. The narrative builds toward it, raising the stakes as successive armies approach Rome from northern Italy. The Vitellian march south toward Rome through provincial territory establishes the climate of unprovoked violence in which an act as unprecedentedly careless of Roman tradition as the Capitol's burning could take place. Long before the fighting in Rome, the Vitellian soldiers had lost sight of their mission and mistaken the point of their service. As a result of their

experience suppressing the revolt of Julius Vindex in Gaul in the previous year far out near the western edge of the empire, they see profit from active warfare as their aim and civil conflict as the most lucrative form of warfare (1.51.1–2). On the march to Rome from Germany the forces of Vitellius' lieutenant, Caecina Alienus, plunder Helvetian territory including a spa, fight a one-sided battle against the nearly defenseless inhabitants, and regard the place – long a peaceful Roman possession – as hostile foreign territory because the locals challenge the army for stealing money sent from Rome earmarked for the maintenance of a fort (1.67–69). After the Helvetians are thoroughly defeated, the Vitellian soldiers demand that they be given the license to destroy the Helvetian capital, Aventicum. Only a pathetic speech by one of the locals prevents that outcome. Compared to other acts of violence in the *Histories*, at least Caecina's men have a cause for their violence. The army of Vitellius' other chief lieutenant, Fabius Valens, is so out of control that it slaughters thousands of innocent people at Divodurum in Gallia Belgica simply because it had become frightened for no identifiable cause (1.63.2).

Treating provincials as enemies is a reflection of the transformation of the Vitellian armies from protectors of the empire to exploiters of it. Thus, after the defeat of the Othonians at the battle of Bedriacum, the Vitellians, having honed their talent for rapine in the provinces north of the Alps, turn their greed against the citizens of Italy (2.56.1). The Vitellian armies carry their mad violence into Italy and see no reason to restrain their conduct in the land of Roman citizens. Their priority is personal enrichment and the best way to do that is to employ the violence they should direct at external enemies against Roman subjects and ultimately Roman citizens. Facing no challenge on their entry into Rome, Vitellius and his forces enter the city peacefully. In a telling gesture, Vitellius wishes to ride on horseback into the city but is prevented by his lieutenants since that entrance would have suggested not a returning emperor but a foreign conqueror (2.89.1).

The Flavian attack on Italy and ultimately Rome is led by Antonius Primus. Like many other commanders in the text, he is a man of dubious character but skillful in command (2.86.2 quoted above; 3.2.1). After a poorly defended entrance into Italy, the Flavians fight the Vitellians in a major battle at Bedriacum, the same site as the climactic battle between the Vitellians and Othonians about six months before. Although the Vitellian soldiers and even the residents of Cremona fight with effort, the Flavians overcome their opponents and in a frenzied onslaught rush into Cremona and begin sacking the city, unleashing their greed and lust on the defenseless inhabitants (3.22–33). The Flavian forces are no different from the Vitellians; they too have acquired a taste for plundering Roman citizens (3.15.2).

After four days of violence and looting, the soldiers succeed in burning the city to the ground. Tacitus takes the unusual step of appending an obituary for the town of Cremona. He employs death notices extensively throughout the *Histories* for dead emperors, including for Galba (1.49.3–4), Otho (2.50.1), and Vitellius (3.86.1–2), and for men of significance such as Titus Vinius (1.48.2–4) and Flavius Sabinus (3.75.1–2), but it is not his practice to do so for things. Including an obituary for the city of Cremona (and for the Capitoline at 3.72) enables Tacitus to turn it into a negative exemplum in the work. The sack of Cremona serves as a harbinger for the even graver perversity that is the burning of the Capitol. But it is only the scale of those acts that draws Tacitus' grand condemnations. He has already made clear that there is a progression of violence that leads from provincial towns such as Aventicum and Divodurum through Cremona up to the Capitol that knits the empire together. This progression puts provincial and citizen alike in the position of victim of the Roman armies, which, regardless of the side of the civil war they support, made the inhabitants of the empire their true enemy.

6. The Form of the *Histories*

The *Histories* opens in January of 69 CE with the news that the legions of Upper Germany have revolted. For a greater exposition of how the empire reached the brink of total disaster in 69 CE, Tacitus could have begun back in 68 with the revolt of the governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, Julius Vindex, an event that precipitated the fall of Nero. Starting then would have allowed Tacitus to cover the rise of Galba, first as a partisan of Vindex's revolt and then later as the new emperor. Why Tacitus did not choose an earlier date or why he chose the date he did is unknowable, but it can be stated affirmatively that beginning on January 1 with the names of the consuls is a programmatic statement that the *Histories* will be annalistic. *Annales* are the quintessential Roman historiographic form, notionally stretching back to the practice of Rome's chief priest, the *pontifex maximus*, before Roman literature proper existed (Frier 1979, 83–106; Oakley 1997, 21–108). The opening sentence of the text announces Tacitus' intention to join this tradition: "The consuls Servius Galba (for the second) and Titus Vinius will be the beginning of my work" (*initium mihi operis Seruius Galba iterum et Titus Vinius consules erunt*, 1.1.1). The consular dating alludes to the annalistic tradition beginning with Fabius Pictor and continuing through most notably Sallust and Livy (among many others) and promises the following

work will be like those of his predecessors. The future tense of the verb (*erunt*) in that first sentence, however, discloses that Tacitus' narrative will not be smoothly squeezed into the annalistic format. Tacitus invests much in showing the "challenge" of fitting the events of 69 CE into *annales*. Of course, the structure of *annales* was not monolithic; however, to create friction between the events of 69 CE and the narrative mode, Tacitus would have the reader believe *annales* had rigid expectations (Kraus 1994, 10–12; Rich 1997; Feeney 2007, 190–191). Tacitus exploits these rigid expectations of his own creation and the fact that the material covered in the *Histories* does not meet them to show how chaotic and contrary to Roman tradition the events of 69 CE are and how skilled a historian he is to fit them into a coherent piece of historiography.

This tension between the annalistic format and the events of 69 CE asks whether *annales* are an appropriate historiographic form for the principate in general and an imperial civil war in particular. Tacitus explores this question in a variety of ways throughout the narrative. For one, he demonstrates that the political foundations of *annales* have been undermined. Tacitus implicitly calls into question even the programmatic practice of consular dating by revealing that the position of consul lacks any authority or even respectability in its own right and is used mostly as a prize for the supporters of the emperors (1.2.3, 3.55.2, 4.47). In the republic, consuls were the two highest-ranking officials and initiated the year's political, military, and religious events; thus, years were named after them and *annales* structured the years around their movements. In the *Histories*, while consuls certainly remain the titular heads of the year, naming years after them is shown to be a holdover from an earlier system of government that no longer exists.

In addition to questioning the foundations of *annales*, Tacitus presents imperial history as exceeding the boundaries of the traditional format. Tacitus draws attention to his struggle to fit the events of 69 CE into a chronological annalistic framework. Since *annales* are organized annually, Tacitus' version strictly forbids describing future events (prolepses as at 2.8.1 and 4.67.2). The year's rebellions and mutinies require Tacitus to break from a chronological narrative and to employ flashbacks (analepses) to cover events that occurred at the same time as events he has already narrated (Vitellius' revolt at 1.51.1, Fabius Valens' army at 2.27.2, and the Batavian revolt at 4.12.1). His most explicit apology for flashing back in time comes at 2.27.2: "Anyhow, there had previously been a serious outbreak of indiscipline. To explain its origin, it will be necessary for me to revert to an earlier stage in the narrative, as it would have been wrong to interrupt the sequence of Caecina's operations" (*gravis*

alioquin seditio exarserat, quam altiore initio (neque enim rerum a Caecina gestarum ordinem interrumpi oportuerat) repetam). In each instance of analepsis, Tacitus draws attention to the fact that the overabundance of storylines in 69 CE forces him to move forward in time and then back again so that he can give an account of every major crisis.

How Tacitus presents the annalistic format and how the events in the *Histories* interact with that form opens up questions about the nature of the principate and its relation to the republican past as symbolized by *annales*. Since *annales* are the classic republican historiographic form, the inability to accommodate the events of 69 CE suggests that imperial history is substantively different from republican history. The use of *annales* at all is often interpreted as a sign of Tacitean cynicism about the lie that the principate retains any form of republican liberty (Clarke 2002, 86). It must be noted, however, that Tacitus does employ *annales* as opposed to biography, which with Suetonius and later the *Historia Augusta* was to become the primary form of imperial historiography and indeed exerts a strong pull throughout Tacitus' works (Syme 1974). The tension between form and content in the *Histories* opens up questions about the façade of the principate, but it also suggests the possibility that there may be some continuity between the republican past and the imperial present.

7. Ethnic Identity

Another component of the annalistic form is a distinction between domestic and foreign affairs (*res internae* and *res externae*). The ideal annalistic year would feature clear-cut boundaries between activity at home and abroad: the internal Roman sphere would focus on political, religious, and social matters while the foreign sphere would display the campaigns and successes of the Roman military. Of course in practice, *annales* were much more varied and could be organized differently; but, again, Tacitus would have us believe otherwise. Much of the action in the *Histories* takes place outside of Rome, but Tacitus does not explicitly mark most of these episodes as *res externae* and indeed only characterizes six chapters as *res externae* (1.79, 3.5, and 3.45–48). Tacitus again uses the structure to set up themes in the text. It is not surprising that *res internae* predominate because in a civil war domestic affairs enfold foreign ones as the military turns on itself and against the state. But it would not do justice to the text simply to see Tacitus' presentation of the civil war solely as an internal matter that draws the rest of the empire into itself. The civil war of 69 CE (and its

back story in 68 CE) is in fact very much an international affair as non-Roman provincial subjects are involved in all of the fighting and are active participants in each of the revolts. Roman commanders fear the power of the Batavian cohorts (1.59.1). Before the first battle of Bedriacum, Tacitus doubts that the Othonians and Vitellians could ever have negotiated a settlement without bloodshed, since the two sides did not even speak the same language (2.37.2). The third legion under the command of Antonius Primus prepares for the second battle of Bedriacum by worshipping the sun (3.24.3). This disappearance of *res externae* signals not so much their absence as the incorporation of foreign events into domestic affairs.

In the narrative the state of ethnic identity in the principate mirrors the blending of formal categories. Tacitus shows that Roman and Other are not at all stable. There are a myriad of identities and statuses within the empire. The citizenship held by a Roman cohort in Trapezus on the Black Sea does not erase the fact that its members fight like the meek royal guard of the kingdom of Pontus they had recently been before they had been granted Roman citizenship (3.47.2). Roman legions in Syria are moved to revolt at the suggestion that they might be transferred to Germany, not so much because the change in the climate is undesirable as because they would have to leave behind the families they have created with the local women (2.80.3). During the Batavian revolt German tribes capture the city of Cologne and demand that peace requires the execution of all Roman citizens (4.64.2). The people of Cologne refuse, on the grounds that doing so would require them to kill their own family members because of all the intermarriage between the people of Cologne and the Romans (4.65.2). The account of the empire-wide civil war becomes a means of exploring the degrees of integration of the provincial subjects into the Roman state. While they do not typically hold high office or other positions of authority, Tacitus shows that on the ground the dynamic between ruler and ruled is becoming hazy, with the two sides merging together in differing ways in different places.

Julius Civilis, the leader of the Batavian revolt, is the individual incarnation of the absorption of *res externae* into *res internae*. He is at once a scion of a royal Batavian family and, as his name implies, a Roman citizen. In the context of his revolt, which is partially a domestic war and partially foreign, his name is extremely suggestive (Haynes 2003, 148). Civilis points not only to the Roman citizenship that his family must have been awarded under Caesar, Augustus, or Tiberius (Chilver and Townend 1985, 34), but also to the dark side of Roman history, civil war. After narrating a year of continuous civil war, Tacitus tells the story of a Roman citizen of Batavian origins who

spearheads a revolt that is encouraged by the Flavians as another front against the Vitellians but is really a provincial rebellion seeking freedom for various tribes on the Rhine (4.13.2). The suggestively in-between nature of Civilis himself extends beyond his name and the citizenship he possesses. Tacitus makes clear that Civilis' intellect is hardly that of the average barbarian; he is "clever beyond what is accustomed for barbarians" (*ultra quam barbaris solitum ingenio sollers*, 4.13.2). Further, Civilis himself seems to feel the need to increase his native credibility at the beginning of the revolt by growing out a suitably rugged beard and dying it red (4.61.1), the hair color *par excellence* of fake northern barbarians (Suet., *Cal.* 47). Tacitus also has Civilis compare himself to the similarly one-eyed Roman rebel Sertorius, a Sabine who first was ejected from Rome before he created his own mini-Roman state in Spain (4.13.2). These aspects of Civilis point not to a straightforward barbarian but to a mixed Batavian-Roman who for reasons of personal animus toward the Roman state decides to revolt.

While Civilis has a troubled personal history with Roman authorities – he was imprisoned by Nero and later again by Vitellius (4.13.1) – that could cause his revolt to be dismissed as merely a personal grudge acted out on a grand scale, in Tacitus' presentation he nevertheless gives voice to complaints that resonate with the northern provincials about the meager rewards the Roman empire provides for their service in the Roman military: "What reward do you expect for your blood shed so many times except unappreciated military service, undying tribute ... and the unpredictable characters of slave-masters" (*quod praemium effusi totiens sanguinis expectatis nisi ingratham militiam, immortalia tributa ... dominorum ingenia*, 4.32.2). Civilis uses the recruitment of Batavian young men as the flashpoint for the revolt. Tacitus validates provincial anger over the levy by noting that the Roman administrators make the levies, which are bad on their own, worse by using them as a means of personal gain and satisfying their lusts (4.14.1). Civilis cites this treatment of provincials as evidence that provincials are treated not as allies but as slaves (4.14.2). Civilis sees a bitter irony here, because according to him the Roman military controls and when necessary conquers its subjects by provincial manpower: "The provinces are conquered by the blood of the provinces" (*prouinciarum sanguine prouincias uinci*, 4.17.2). Civilis points to Rome's divide-and-rule style of governing the empire in hopes that the provincials will realize who their true enemy is. Thus, while Tacitus may locate the inspiration for the revolt in Civilis' private gripes, in Civilis' rhetoric he offers compelling reasons for the tribes of Gaul and Germany to join.

Tacitus identifies provincial anger over their treatment by their

supposed allies as the source of the revolt. If the only reward for years of faithful service is being treated like slaves, then the deal is not worth it. The text opens up the question of whether the provincials ought to get something more for those years of service. The Roman general Petilius Cerialis talks about the Romans having been invited in by the Gallic tribes and staying on as their protectors (4.73–74). This rhetoric, lifted straight out of Caesar's *Gallic War*, is as disingenuous as Civilis' talk of *libertas* for the tribes on the Rhine when he really aims for personal power. The significance of the revolt, though, does not lie with the main players. Tacitus uses this fight, left over from the wars of 69 CE, to suggest that the status quo does not work any more. The Roman government, regardless of who is emperor, needs the manpower the provinces provide. The provincial subjects themselves are becoming more highly Romanized all the time – their shared histories by 69 CE stretch back over a hundred years. The *Histories* may be suggesting that the provincials who have long served Rome do not deserve to be pitted against one another – and, more than just that, they have earned the reward of greater incorporation into the management of the empire than they have previously been granted.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The *Histories* is increasingly well served with commentaries. Heubner (1963–1982) covers the entire work in German. In English, Chilver (1979) on Books 1 and 2, Wellesley (1972) on Book 3, and Chilver and Townend (1985) on Books 4 and 5 are almost exclusively focused on historical matters. More recently Damon (2003) on Book 1 and Ash (2007a) on Book 2 have added detailed attention to literary aspects and also provide informative introductions. For most aspects of Tacitus and the *Histories*, Syme (1958) remains indispensable.

There have been three fairly recent monographs devoted entirely or heavily to the *Histories*. Ash (1999) examines Tacitus' presentation of the various armies, the emperors, and Antonius Primus with heavy emphasis on parallel sources and the intertextual tradition. Haynes (2003) explores the inescapability of Julio-Claudian ideology in the framing and interpretation of past events. Sailor (2008), which contains a very extensive bibliography, devotes two substantial chapters to Tacitus' creation of a narrative voice that claims to be the lone truthful interpreter of Roman history.

Fundamental to any consideration of Latin historiography are the now classic discussions of Wiseman (1979) and Woodman (1988) on the role of rhetoric in Roman historiography. The list of more specific

studies is infinite. For background on *sententiae* in Tacitus see Sinclair (1995), and for a discussion specific to the *Histories* see Keitel (2006). Keitel (1991; 1993) and Levene (1999) study the role of speeches in the *Histories*. Damon (2006) details the qualities that enable Vespasian to separate himself from the three previous emperors and to succeed as emperor. Out of a large number of his articles on the *Histories*, for the sake of brevity I cite only Morgan (1994) on the Vitellians in Gaul. Pomeroy (1991) devotes a chapter to obituaries in Tacitus. On the burning of the Capitol see Edwards (1996, 74–82). For the important subject of the role of the citizens of Rome in the *Histories* see Ash (2007b). Manolaraki (2005) explores the different reactions of the Vitellians on their visit to Bedriacum after the first battle there. Since there is as yet no study of the annalistic technique in the *Histories*, Ginsburg (1981) on the *Annals* must suffice. On the role of the relationship between Rome and the provinces see Pomeroy (2003).

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*The Annals*¹

Herbert W. Benario

1. Tacitus' Career and Earlier Works

When Tacitus began to contemplate a history of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, about the year 114, he was able to look back upon a full and satisfying career. He was about sixty years old, had had significant political honors, and was recognized by his contemporaries as Rome's leading orator and political analyst. Surely no one could have faulted him had he chosen full retirement; had he taken that route, however, perhaps the most significant work of any Roman historian would never have appeared. Posterity's judgment is that the world's understanding of political power has, for almost two millennia, profited from his decision to go on.

Tacitus was born in the mid-fifties, perhaps in northern Italy, more likely in southern Gaul, into an equestrian family. An imperial procurator in Gallia Belgica (the part of Gaul closest to Germania) named Cornelius Tacitus was mentioned by Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 7.76). This man was, in all likelihood, the historian's father and may well have been responsible for the son's interests in Roman provinces, above all Britain and Germany.

Young Tacitus was nearing his teen years when Nero was deposed and the year of the four emperors ensued, with dramatic and drastic consequences for Gaul and Germany. We have no details about his tenure in the minor offices at the beginning of the senatorial *cursus honorum*, but he obviously proceeded without hindrance until his quaestorship in 81 or 82. During the 70s he became known to a prominent supporter of Vespasian, Cn. Iulius Agricola, a native of Forum Iulii in Provence, who had been in Britain serving on the governor's staff during the devastating and deadly revolt of Boudica and who later commanded a legion in the same province. Agricola

was appointed governor of Britain for 77, where he was to stay for seven years, but before he left Rome he married his daughter to Tacitus. We do not know the girl's name (she would have been about thirteen years old), but Tacitus spoke highly of her when he wrote the biography of his father-in-law some twenty years later: "When he was consul, he betrothed his daughter, then a maiden of high promise, to me, and gave her to me after his consulship" (*consul egregiae tum spei filiam iuueni mihi despondit ac post consulatum collocauit*, Ag. 9.6).

Tacitus' quaestorship was followed by the praetorship in 88. He tells us of his official activities in that year, when discussing a similar event in the reign of Claudius:

Isdem consulibus ludi saeculares octingentesimo post Romam conditam, quarto et sexagesimo, quam Augustus ediderat, spectati sunt. Utriusque principis rationes praetermitto, satis narratas libris, quibus res imperatoris Domitiani composui. Nam is quoque edidit ludos saeculares, iisque intentius adfui sacerdotio quindecimuirali praeditus ac tunc praetor. Quod non iactantia refero, sed quia collegio quindecimuirum antiquitus ea cura, et magistratus potissimum exsequebantur officia caerimoniarum.

(*Ann. 11.11.1*)

In the same consulship the secular games were celebrated in the 800th year after the foundation of Rome and in the sixty-fourth after Augustus had put them on. I omit the reasons which each princeps had, since they have been adequately reported in the books which I composed on the affairs of the emperor Domitian. For he also put on secular games, in which I was involved with considerable responsibility, since I was a member of the priesthood of the Fifteen and was at the time praetor. I do not report this in order to boast, but because, since the days of antiquity, the College of Fifteen had responsibility for them and the magistrates particularly performed the ceremonial duties.

He and his wife were away from Rome for four years, during which period Agricola died (Ag. 45.4–5). He may well have been a legionary legate in Germany. When he returned to Rome, he was rewarded with a consulate in the fateful year 97, when the elderly Nerva adopted Trajan to succeed him, a process in which Tacitus may well have played a part. During this year he delivered the funeral oration in honor of Verginius Rufus who, after the death of Nero, had refused the offer from his troops to become emperor. Pliny the Younger gives details (*Ep.* 6.10.4, 9.19.1). Two years later Tacitus joined Pliny in prosecuting Marius Priscus, charged with extortion by the provincials of Africa. They carried the day, and Pliny stated that

Tacitus spoke *eloquentissime* and with majesty (*Ep.* 2.11.17).

It was in the years after the death of Domitian, when he could write “Nerva Caesar brought together concepts once incompatible, the rule of one man and personal freedom” (*Nerva Caesar res olim dissociabiles miscuerit, principatum et libertatem*, *Ag.* 3.1), that Tacitus composed his first two works, *Agricola* and *Germania*. Chapter 3 intimates that Tacitus might well, in years to come, write the history of these two emperors. These first works were followed, probably in 102, by the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*. Not long thereafter he began work on the *Histories*, much his most significant undertaking up to this point.

The grand theme that Tacitus treats in the *Histories* is unmatched anywhere else in his work. One can almost assume that in a narrative detailing foreign wars, Rome will ultimately triumph and will indeed be able to overcome any internal disagreements; however, in 68 and 69 Rome’s greatest enemy was herself. This was civil war perhaps unrivaled even by those of the first century BCE because much of the fighting and bloodshed took place on Italian soil; there was in addition the very real threat of the break-up of the empire beginning with the Gallic revolt, which changed character from *Civilis* to *Vindex*.

The cataclysm of the end of the descendants of Augustus, the Julio-Claudian dynasty, each of whom must have felt that he was emperor primarily because of his relation to Augustus, was a real thing. When a century has passed and people have become accustomed to a way of life and form of government, a sudden break will cause tremendous shock.

Tacitus said early in the work that the secret of empire was out, an emperor could be made anywhere, *euolgato imperii arcano, posse principem alibi quam Romae fieri* (*Hist.* 1.4.2). He thereby implied that any man could aspire to the principate. In the early days of the republic, the plebeians had had a long and bitter struggle to gain entry to the consulate; now the principate was open to a new man, not only an individual of long-standing nobility but also a *nouus homo* in the more traditional sense, a man not representative of ancient nobility whether republican, triumviral, or Augustan. Vespasian was the first new man on the throne of the empire. Coming from the hills north of Rome in the Sabine country, he anticipates the accession within thirty years of the first Roman born in a province, Trajan, the first of a significant series of emperors non-Italian in birth.

Tacitus’ great subject is narrated with vividness and detail. The story flows with unparalleled ease and tension. The spacious scope of the subject permits him to introduce an abundance of detail throughout, devoting twelve books, as it seems, to a period of twenty-

eight years. We can only imagine the impact of the whole, because merely the first four books and part of the fifth have survived. We may assume that the judgment of Pliny the Younger represented the response of the reading public to the work: "I believe that your histories will be immortal, a prophecy which will surely be correct" (*Auguror, nec me fallit augurium, historias tuas immortales futuras, Ep. 7.33.1*).

Two years after Tacitus completed the *Histories*, he went off to the east in 112 as governor of the province of Asia, one of the most prestigious posts at the culmination of a senatorial career. Upon his return to Rome, when he was almost sixty years old, he could well have decided to devote the rest of his days to a life of leisure. On the contrary, he took in hand the greatest challenge of his intellectual and historiographical career, the history of the first dynasty of Rome's principate. This required a substantial amount of research, using earlier treatments such as the works of Cluvius Rufus, Arulenus Rusticus, and Pliny the Elder, reading the *acta senatus* and the *Memoirs* of Agrippina the Younger and Corbulo, and talking to many of the men deeply involved in the great events of the past, such as Frontinus, Petilius Cerialis, and Verginius Rufus. The testimony of eye-witnesses in the trial of Piso was invaluable to him. Whether Tacitus lived to complete this grand enterprise we do not know. He must have died about 120 (see Birley 2000; Devillers 2003).

2. The *Annals*

Originally, it is generally believed, the *Annals* covered eighteen books, a treatment not quite as spacious as that of the *Histories*, and the *Annals* also are incomplete. There survive Books 1–4, the beginning of 5, 6, 11 (approximately the first third has been lost), and 12 to the middle of 16. In other words, we have four books completely missing in the middle of the work, a large part of one other, a lesser portion of still another, and then the end of the whole from the middle of 16 through 18. There is thus only a little more than half of the original work. The span of years covered by the *Annals* is twice that of the *Histories*, yet the number of books is at most half again as great as that of the *Histories*. Obviously there will be much less detailed coverage. This is no shortcoming, however, because the theme permits treatment in larger units, the emperors did not succeed each other as rapidly as in the beginning of the *Histories*, and Tacitus is concerned not with the survival of the Roman state but rather with the consolidation of the principate after the death of Augustus.

There is only one direct clue to the date of composition in the *Annals* themselves. While relating Germanicus' tour of Egypt, Tacitus states that he got as far as Elephantine and Syene, "once the furthest points of the Roman empire, which now reaches the Red Sea" (*claustra olim Romani imperii, quod nunc rubrum ad mare patescit, Ann. 2.61.2*). The crux of the inquiry is the identification of the *rubrum mare*.

If Tacitus means thereby the *sinus Arabicus*, our Red Sea, he must then refer to the establishment of the province of Arabia Nabataea in 105–106, and the composition of Book 2 will fall in the years soon thereafter. But if *rubrum mare* is to be identified with the western part of the Indian Ocean, a later date is possible. Indeed, the latter interpretation appears more likely. The expression should be understood in the widest sense, the Indian Ocean itself rather than any of its inlets, however important. And the verb *patescit* should be interpreted to refer only to large territories. The only event that would enable Tacitus to write in such terms is Trajan's defeat of the Parthians in 116. It is possible that this contemporary reference was a later insertion into the text, but it is more probable that Tacitus had only recently begun to write and had reached Book 2 in this year. On this view most of the *Annals* will have been written in the principate of Hadrian.

The beginning of the work sets the tone. There is dissatisfaction with, if not enmity toward, the principate. The prooemium is a continuation, in historiographical philosophy, of those of the *Agricola* and the *Histories*. The first three chapters are crucial for understanding Tacitus' frame of reference throughout the entire work. We note that in the first chapter Tacitus telescopes history to reach the present day in about a dozen lines. Vergil, too, had done this in the description of the shield of Aeneas in Book 8 of the *Aeneid* where, from the twins to the battle of Actium, he used less than half his narrative and then devoted the remainder to that culminating struggle of the Roman Revolution. Tacitus here very rapidly mentions the aberrations of government that had occurred in history, aberrations that, precisely because they did not destroy the basic existence of comital and senatorial sovereignty, are considered as no more than transitory events. But with the establishment of the principate this of course changed. The principate may have been an aberration, but it did not disappear.

As he did in the beginning of the *Histories*, Tacitus claims objectivity. He did not see any of the Julio-Claudians as a man of mature years; born early in the reign of Nero, he would perhaps have been in his teens when that emperor died. Nonetheless, he finds it compelling to indicate that he will be impartial, and his claim here is stronger than the earlier one. Further, in spite of the fact that he

proposes to deal with the empire beginning with the reign of Tiberius, he finds it necessary to set the stage by discoursing briefly on the end of Augustus. In the last sentence of the first chapter, he offers his program, along with his statement of impartiality: "Hence my purpose is to relate a few facts about Augustus – more particularly his last acts, then the reign of Tiberius, and all which follows, without either bitterness or partiality, from any motives to which I am far removed" (*inde consilium mihi pauca de Augusto et extrema tradere, mox Tiberii principatum et cetera, sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo, Ann. 1.1.3*).

Whether Tacitus was able to achieve his goal of writing history *sine ira et studio* is one of the most intriguing questions in the study of our historian. His claim in the *Annals* is necessarily stronger than that in the *Histories* because in this work he is concerned with the basic inquiry into the nature and existence of the principate. It was a form of government that had many admirers and many opponents, with the former far more numerous than the latter but, nonetheless, philosophically the upper class could not be neutral. The principate existed; individuals would have to adjust to it and serve it if they wished a public career. Nevertheless, they did not have to accept it in their hearts and could still believe that the old days had been better.

Tacitus' mood in these three chapters is underscored very strongly by his choice of words such as *exuto*, "cast off," referring to the elimination of Lepidus as a rival to Octavian, and *dominatio*, suggesting autocracy in Augustus' settlement, by innuendo implying that people died by treachery and deceit, and by using a tone of grudging tribute (see Benario 1964–1965a). At the end of the third chapter there is a very brief statement of the general good health of the empire at the death of the first *princeps*:

Bellum ea tempestate nullum nisi aduersus Germanos supererat, abolendae magis infamiae ob amissum cum Quinctilio Varo exercitum quam cupidine proferendi imperii aut dignum ob praemium. domi res tranquillae, eadem magistratuum uocabula; iuniores post Actiacam uictoriam, etiam senes plerique inter bella ciuium nati: quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam uidisset?

(*Ann. 1.3.6*)

There was no war at that time other than that against the Germans, which was fought rather to erase the disgrace over the loss of the army with Quinctilius Varus than because of a desire to extend the empire or for some worthy reward. At home things were calm, there were the same names of magistracies; the younger generation had been born after the victory at Actium, even most old men had been born while the civil wars were

going on: how few were left who had seen the republic?

Res publica here can quite appropriately be translated “republic” in the old sense of the free state under the hegemony of the senatorial class. The government that existed now was quite a different thing.

We move then to a presentation of some of the members of the imperial family and to the passing of Augustus. Here too innuendo has full scope, with the intimation that Agrippa Postumus was treacherously murdered, that Augustus had hoped for a reconciliation with his grandson, and that the deed had been accomplished without Tiberius’ knowledge.

Chapter 6 begins most ominously: “The first crime of the new reign was the murder of Postumus Agrippa” (*Primum facinus noui principatus fuit Postumi Agrippae caedes, Ann. 1.6.1*). It does not take much imagination to forecast what the rest of Tiberius’ reign will be like if this is the beginning. The chapter concludes with the advice of Sallustius Crispus, who had been an intimate of Augustus, to the empress Livia that the Senate must not be allowed to investigate the deed and establish responsibility: “He advised Livia that the secrets of the household, the advice of friends, the services of soldiers should not be made public, and that Tiberius should not weaken the strength of the principate by referring all things to the Senate: this was a basic element of rule, that an account could not balance unless it were referred to one man” (*monuit Liuiam, ne arcana domus, ne consilia amicorum, ministeria militum uulgarentur, neue Tiberius uim principatus resolveret cuncta ad senatum uocando: eam condicionem esse imperandi, ut non aliter constet quam si uni reddatur, Ann. 1.6.3*). In spite of the façade of the restored republic that Augustus had so painfully erected, it was quite obvious that this was an empire governed at the will of one man. This comment is put in the mouth of one of Tacitus’ most important minor characters. Sallustius Crispus will appear twice later in the narrative.

The degradation of the Senate and the upper class in offering allegiance to Tiberius is delineated. Then follows a discussion about the honors to be paid to Augustus and comments of the people, both those who favored the first emperor and those who disliked him. Tacitus here displays virtuosity in the treatment of material. The favorable report of Augustus comes first and is much briefer than the opposing opinions. The net effect is that one believes and remembers the ill. Many, indeed most, of the criticisms leveled at the first emperor concern his private household and events that marked the triumviral period. No one, not even Augustus himself, would have been able to excuse them absolutely; but the dividing line between the young Octavian and the mature Augustus, who reigned after the battle of Actium for some forty-five years, was totally blurred so that the ill-

doings of the early years overwhelm the achievements of the later ones (see Walker 1952; Daitz 1960).

Syme's first great book, *The Roman Revolution*, delineated the change of the governing classes of Italy under Augustus, and Syme could never have been called an enthusiast of Augustus' principate. Yet the final paragraph of that book has a quite different judgment:

From the beginning, from his youthful emergence as a revolutionary leader in public sedition and armed violence, the heir of Caesar had endured to the end. He died on the anniversary of the day when he assumed his first consulate after the march on Rome. Since then, fifty-six years had elapsed. Throughout, in act and policy, he remained true to himself and to the career that began when he raised a private army and "liberated the State from the domination of a faction." *Dux* had become *Princeps* and had converted a party into a government. For power he had sacrificed everything; he had achieved the height of all mortal ambition and in his ambition he had saved and regenerated the Roman People.

(Syme 1939, 524)

Tiberius' succession then follows with his perhaps insincere attempt to resist the empire when he already in fact possessed and exercised its prime features, tribunician power and *imperium*, and several rivals are mentioned. Tacitus introduces these men, it may be, for little reason other than to have an opportunity early in the work to present the importance of the capacity of being emperor. Tiberius himself claims that only the mind of the deified Augustus had been equal to such a crushing burden: *solam diui Augusti mentem tantae molis capacem* (*Ann.* 1.11.1). What Tacitus mentioned in the obituary of Galba, that he was *capax imperii* ("capable of rule," *Hist.* 1.49.4), is a theme that pervades much of his historical work, although he does not himself use the phrase very often. Augustus had mentioned three possible rivals for Tiberius: a man who was *capax* but who did not long for the purple; another who was greedy for it but *minor*, precisely the opposite of *capax*; a third who was by no means unworthy and a likely challenger if opportunity should offer (*Ann.* 1.13.2). It may not be too much to see throughout Tacitus' work a yearning to underscore those who, given the chance, would have served the empire well, the few men in the span of one hundred years who were indeed *capaces imperii* (see Benario 1972).

From this beginning (the first fifteen chapters that set the scene in Rome and in the imperial house and, perhaps most importantly, carry us through the death of the first emperor to the accession of the second), Tacitus turns to affairs that are basically foreign without,

however, totally ignoring events at Rome, particularly to emphasize the renewed importance of the laws against treason, *maiestas*, the significance of which will be a major subject of later books. Tacitus' narrative has both a hero and an anti-hero in the first three books. As soon as Tacitus reaches the beginning of chapter 16, he sets the tone: "This was the state of affairs at home, when sedition invaded the Pannonian legions, not for any new reasons, save that a new emperor offered opportunity for the licentiousness of mobs and hope for rewards from civil war" (*Hic rerum urbanarum status erat, cum Pannonicas legiones seditio incessit, nullis nouis causis, nisi quod mutatus princeps licentiam turbarum et ex ciuili bello spem praemiorum ostendebat, Ann. 1.16.1*). We are treated in rapid succession to the uprising of the Pannonian legions and those of the armies of Germany and the emperor's sons' attempts to quell them, more precisely his own son Drusus in Pannonia and his adopted son Germanicus, his natural nephew, in Germany. Drusus receives much less attention than does Germanicus throughout the work, but he is nonetheless presented here as the more successful of the two. Once the mutiny in Germany is ended, Germanicus undertakes a campaign against the Germans. We are brought to the site of the Teutoburg Forest where, in the year 9 CE, the German chieftain Arminius had destroyed three legions with their commander Publius Quinctilius Varus. There are vivid scenes of war and battle; Germanicus' enterprises are immediately successful, but their long-range effect is minimal.

In the second book there is a tremendously vivid representation of the storm in which Tacitus describes Germanicus' almost fatal miscalculations and where Tacitus may have had recourse to firsthand reports of what happened, particularly the poem of an officer of Germanicus, Albinovanus Pedo, as well as the grand scene in the first book of the *Aeneid*:

But with the summer now well along, some of the legions were sent back to winter quarters by a land route; a larger number on board the fleet Caesar transported into the Ocean by the Weser River. At first the calm sea hummed with the oars of a thousand ships or was passed through by sails; soon hail poured down from a black mass of clouds; simultaneously the waves, battered by varied blasts from all directions, took away visibility and made control of the ships difficult; and the soldiers, frightened and unaware of the sea's dangers, while they threw the crew into confusion or helped them without any plan, prevented those who knew what they were doing from performing their duties. Then the whole sky and the entire sea turned toward the south and the damp lands of Germany, an area dangerous because of the deep rivers and the enormous sweep of clouds. The south wind, made

more horrible by the strength of the nearby north, seized and scattered the ships into the open waters of Ocean or onto islands hostile with their broken rocks or hidden shoals. When these dangers had only barely and with difficulty been avoided, after the sea surge changed and carried them in the same direction as the wind, they could not stay in place with anchors nor bail out the waves which burst in: horses, pack animals, equipment, even arms are thrown overboard, so that the vessels, leaking through their sides in the overpowering waves, would be lighter.

As much as the Ocean is more violent than any other sea and Germany stands out because of the violence of its climate, to the same extent did that disaster stand out because of its novelty and magnitude, with hostile shores round about or the water so deep that the sea was believed to be at the end of the earth and without lands. Some of the ships were sunk, a larger number was scattered among islands further off; and the soldiers, with no human civilization there, were overcome by famine, except those whom the carcasses of horses, washed ashore in the same place, had kept alive. Only the trireme of Germanicus reached the land of the Chauci; his friends prevented him with difficulty from hurling himself into the same sea when, for all those days and nights, among the rocks and the jutting shores, he kept crying out that he was to blame for so great a disaster. Finally, when the surge ebbed and with favoring wind, crippled ships returned, with very few oars and clothing as sails, and some towed by those in better condition. Those which had been rapidly repaired he sent out to check the islands and by that concern many were rescued; many the Angrivarii, who had recently become allies, ransomed from tribes who lived further inland and brought them back; some had been carried into Britain and were sent back by the chieftains. When each had returned from far away, they spoke of marvelous things: the violence of the whirlwinds and the strange birds, sea monsters, the double bodies of men and beasts, whether seen or believed in their fear.

(Ann. 2.23–24)

Germanicus is then recalled, with high honor, but there is general belief among the people that Tiberius is jealous of his success. Innuendo may be at work here, but the reason given for the recall is that his talents are needed in the East against the threat of the Parthians. On his way there he undertakes a grand tour of inspection of many cities, among them Athens, visits Egypt without permission, thereby violating the long-standing stipulations of Augustus and enraging Tiberius, and at last arrives in Syria, now governed by a man

who is a bitter personal enemy but an extremely close confidant of the emperor. This is Cnaeus Piso, and the last part of Book 2 is concerned with the rivalry of these two important men. Their conflict ends with Germanicus' death. He himself suspected murder at the hands of Piso and charges his wife and followers to beware of Piso and to bring him to justice.

The first part of Book 3 is concerned with the trial of Piso and his suicide when he realizes that the emperor is incapable of supporting him or unwilling to do so. The emotional level is extremely high throughout, for the atmosphere is charged not only with the investigation of a crime alleged to have removed the heir of empire and the favorite of the Roman people, but also with the fierce nature and thirst for revenge of Agrippina, the widow, and the belief that the deed had been accomplished at the instance of the emperor and his mother. Indeed Tacitus suggests as much when, in a rare intrusion of his own person into the narrative, he reports, "I remember that I heard from older men that a document was rather frequently seen in Piso's hand, which he himself did not make public; but his friends kept saying that, contained therein, were a letter of Tiberius and instructions against Germanicus, and that he had resolved to reveal it among the senators and to charge the emperor, if he had not been hoodwinked by Sejanus with empty promises; and that he had not died of his own volition, but by an assassin who had been let in. I would assert the truth of neither of these, nor should I have concealed what was said by those who survived to the period of our youth" (*Ann.* 3.16.1; see Eck, Caballos, and Fernández 1996). The remainder of the book deals with a medley of subjects, tying up many of the important aspects of Tiberius' first nine years as emperor.

Book 4 begins with the detailed introduction of the man who can be called the evil spirit of the Tiberian years, Lucius Aelius Sejanus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard to whom, in the first chapter, Tacitus gives a Sallustian biography. He is very much like Catiline in ability, in ambition, and in failings, and it is surely part of Tacitus' purpose to make his readers realize what the end is likely to be.

Chapters 1–7 present a review of the empire, and it is quite remarkable that almost everything that is said is complimentary and good. The empire was on an even keel, the laws were enforced impartially, the emperor himself behaved in an unexceptional manner. Yet in the year 23 all this changed. Chiefly responsible was Sejanus, whose sudden ascendancy was a sign that the fortune of the empire was becoming capricious (*cum repente turbare fortuna coepit*, *Ann.* 4.1.1). The world became disjointed.

In chapter 7, Tacitus bluntly states that in this year Tiberius began to change for the worse, and it was the death of Drusus, his son, and

not that of Germanicus which was responsible for this change. This is a very important point in understanding Tacitus' history. The other ancient sources for these events, Suetonius and Dio Cassius, agree in placing the turning point of Tiberius' reign in the year 19, precisely with the death of Germanicus. The source from which these two drew must have read this way. Tacitus, either because he followed a different source or because his own judgment led him to this conclusion, chose rather to put the blame not on Germanicus' death but on the meteoric rise of the evil minister Sejanus, whose first crime was the murder of Drusus.

The second half of the first hexad of the *Annals* is marked by the constant interplay of three strong characters – Tiberius, Sejanus, and Agrippina, Germanicus' widow – and the contest between the latter pair to maintain or obtain influence over the emperor. Sejanus gradually won Tiberius' complete confidence, a process culminating in Sejanus' total disregard for his own safety in protecting the emperor's person at Spelunca, the modern Sperlonga, when an artificial grotto in which the emperor was dining began to collapse (*Ann.* 4.59). It was at Sejanus' behest that Tiberius removed himself from Rome, first to Campania and then to Capri. Never, for more than a decade, did he return to the capital, while Sejanus, for the first five years of this period, himself ran the government in Rome.

Book 5, which is largely missing, would have detailed the fall of Sejanus. We do not possess what must have been one of Tacitus' most vivid narratives. We can get a sense of its matter from Juvenal, who speaks of a long letter coming from Capri that was read to the Senate; at the end Sejanus was condemned and at once put to death, his statues overturned, and his body thrown into the Tiber (*Juv.* 10.54–89; see Keane in this volume). Book 6 continues with what Tacitus represents as a blood bath, with the slaughter of Sejanus' supporters, and Tiberius' own personal disintegration until, at the end of life, he was no more than a monster satisfying his cruelest whims. The book concludes with a detailed obituary and character sketch; this last chapter makes it very clear that Tacitus considered Tiberius' character to have always been monstrous.

In his earlier years Tiberius disguised his true nature under the influence of first one person and then another; then, when the last restraining influence had been removed, he allowed his real self to appear. Not everyone will accept this kind of judgment, but it must be remembered that in antiquity the general understanding of an individual's character, his *ingenium*, was that he was born with it and that it never changed or developed. Therefore, if there were different phases of a person's character during his life, there must be an explanation. Dissimulation is the easiest answer.

The kind of reign that Gaius had was accurately forecast by Tacitus, in the final words of a great man, Lucius Arruntius:

an, cum Tiberius post tantam rerum experientiam ui dominationis conuulsus et mutatus sit, C. Caesarem uix finita pueritia, ignarum omnium aut pessimis innutritum, meliora capessiturum Macrone duce, qui ut deterior ad opprimendum Seianum delectus plura per scelera rem publicam conflictauisset? prospectare iam se acrius seruitium, eoque fugere simul acta et instantia. haec uatis in modum dictitans uenas resoluit. documento sequentia erunt bene Arruntium morte usum.

(*Ann.* 6.48.2–3)

Was it possible that, when Tiberius, after such great experience of affairs, was overwhelmed and changed by the force of absolute rule, Gaius Caesar, who was scarcely out of his boyhood, ignorant of all things or nourished by the worst, would perform better with Macro as his advisor, who had been chosen to crush Sejanus since he was worse than the latter and had damaged the state through his numerous crimes? (He continued) that he now foresaw a more bitter servitude and for that reason he was at the same time fleeing from those crimes already committed and those impending. Saying these things as if he were a prophet, he opened his veins. Subsequent events will prove that Arruntius made good use of death.

The narrative resumes in Book 11. The entire principate of Gaius and Claudius' first six years have been lost. In Books 11 and 12, the picture of the emperor as a buffoon, as a man ill chosen for the empire (whose only recommendations were his relationship to the first *princeps* and the fact that he was Germanicus' brother), and as the plaything of his freedmen and his wives, is a very coherent one. Yet Tacitus too makes it quite obvious that Claudius was much more than this. He was an administrator with remarkable talent and assiduity; this is most easily understood in the speech that Claudius made on the admission of certain Gallic chieftains to the Senate (*Ann.* 11.24). We have a large part of the original address preserved on a bronze tablet found at Lyons in France (*ILS* 212). This is the only opportunity moderns have in the entire realm of ancient history to compare an original text with the version that a historian later produced. Claudius' speech is far more rambling, far more imprecise. Tacitus has tightened it up and underscored the emperor's arguments in a much more effective way. He has not done the original a disservice, nor has he misrepresented it; he has, on the contrary, made it clear that Claudius' administrative talents and historical sense were by no means negligible. This conclusion is supported by another speech that

Claudius delivered, of which there is no version in the text, on the status of the Anauni, a people who lived in the Alps and suddenly found their citizenship challenged (*ILS* 206).

Book 13 begins with ominous tones, recalling the beginning of Tiberius' reign (*Ann.* 1.6): "The first death under the new emperor was that of Junius Silanus, proconsul of Asia" (*prima nouo principatu mors Iunii Silani proconsulis Asiae*, *Ann.* 13.1). It takes little imagination to anticipate that this will be the mood of Nero's entire principate. A young man, he starts out fairly well because of the excellent tutors and guides that his mother had chosen for him: Seneca the philosopher and Afranius Burrus the commander of the Praetorian Guard. Nonetheless, the seeds for evil are present in Nero and are visible throughout; bit by bit, as the narrative proceeds, they take root and flourish. First Britannicus is murdered; soon thereafter follows Agrippina, with some of Tacitus' most remarkable narrative ability brought to bear at the beginning of Book 14.

The following passage concludes this narrative, when Agrippina had survived Nero's attempt to destroy her at sea and the people of the neighborhood rejoiced in her safety:

An enormous crowd gathered on the beaches with torches, and when it was known that Agrippina was safe, they prepared to congratulate her, until they were dismayed by the sight of an armed and threatening column. Anicetus surrounds the villa with guards and, breaking the door, removes those slaves who were in his way until he came to the door of the bedchamber; a few were standing in front of it, the rest having been terrified by the violence caused by the invaders. There was a weak light in the chamber and one maid in attendance, and Agrippina was increasingly anxious, because no one had come from her son, not even Agermus: the appearance of a happy event would be different; now the solitude and sudden noises were signs of serious evil. Then when the maid left she said, "You too abandon me?" and noticed Anicetus, accompanied by the trireme commander Herculeius and Obaritus, a fleet centurion. She said that if he had come to visit her, then he should report that she was recovered, but if he was going to commit a crime, then she believed nothing about her son: the murder of his mother had not been ordered. The assassins stood around her bed and first the trierarchus hit her in the head with a club. Then to the centurion who was drawing his sword to kill her, extending her belly she cried out, "Strike my womb!" and she was finished off with many wounds.

(*Ann.* 14.8)

Octavia, Nero's wife, is then eliminated; the aristocracy, in the persons of some of its most prestigious members, prepares a conspiracy against the emperor. It does not succeed, but during it the soldier Subrius Flavius bluntly tells the emperor to his face why he has taken up arms against him:

Asked by Nero for what reasons he had violated his oath, he replied "I hated you, nor was any soldier more faithful to you as long as you deserved to be loved. I began to hate you after you proved to be the murderer of your mother and wife, a charioteer and actor and incendiary." I have reported his very words, because they were not publicized, like Seneca's, and it was appropriate that the unadorned and powerful feelings of a soldier be no less widely known.

(Ann. 15.67.2-3)

The work ends with the trial of Thrasea Paetus and the suicide of the great philosopher and statesman.

There are two high points in these last books from the point of view of historical virtuosity. One we have already mentioned, the murder of Agrippina, for its brilliant evocation of mood and emotion. The other is the fire at Rome and the ensuing persecution (if that is the proper word) of the Christians, with the hatred that Nero won for himself by suspicion for the first act and the indignation against his policy roused by the second. These are treated in 15.38 and 44, although the intervening chapters are important as well. I again offer the last part, dealing with the Christians.

Nero's disgrace was not lessened by any human means nor by the emperor's largess or any sacrifices to the gods, but the belief continued that the fire had been intentionally set. Therefore to eliminate this rumor he falsely produced defendants and inflicted the most extraordinary punishments upon those whom, hated for their crimes, the people called Christians. The origin of this name was Christ, whom the procurator Pontius Pilate put to death in the reign of Tiberius; crushed for a while, the deadly superstition burst forth again not only throughout Judaea, the source of this evil, but even throughout Rome, to which all horrible and shameful things flow from everywhere and are celebrated. Therefore the first persons arrested were those who confessed; then on their information, a great multitude was convicted not so much on the charge of setting the fire as on hatred of the human race. Mockeries were added to their deaths, so that wrapped in the skins of wild animals they might die torn to pieces by dogs, or nailed to crosses they were burned to death to furnish light at night when day had ended. Nero made his own gardens available

for this spectacle and put on circus games, mingling with the people while dressed in a charioteer's uniform or standing in his chariot. As a result there arose compassion toward those who were guilty and who deserved the most extraordinary punishments, on the grounds that they were being destroyed not for the public good but for the savagery of one man.

(*Ann.* 15.44.2–5)

Throughout the entire *Annals*, as they have survived, we see a master historian at work. His approach is largely annalistic; he generally deals with events chronologically but occasionally goes beyond the bounds of strict chronology to treat a theme coherently. This is particularly the case in the later books when, detailing the wars of Corbulo against the Parthians, he permits events to embrace more than one year. He brilliantly molds his mood by choice of vocabulary, by skillful positioning of events and commentary upon them, and by repetition of suggestion. A splendid instance of the last is the treatment of Sallustius Crispus, who was responsible, it was said in 1.6, for the murder of Agrippa Postumus, whoever it was who gave the orders; in 2.40 he is called upon to accomplish the same kind of task, the elimination of an imposter who claimed to be Agrippa Postumus. Last, when Sallustius himself died, Tacitus gives him a splendid obituary, which leaves no doubt but that he had been responsible for the original murder (*Ann.* 3.30). Further, this obituary enables Tacitus to comment upon the transitory nature of influence with an emperor by introducing comparison with Maecenas.

Tacitus accomplishes this mood by his style and by his suggestion of necessity, that things had to happen as they ultimately did, although of course this was by no means always the case. His Latin in the first six books is extremely tight and contorted – one might almost say unnatural. He goes far beyond Sallust, his master, in the desire for a poetic vocabulary, to emphasize inconcinnity, always to surprise the reader (see Martin 1990).

The last six books are by no means as vigorous on this score, perhaps because the subject does not call for it. When dealing with Tiberius, a historian had a subject worthy of genius. What was his character? Why did he act as he did? Was he always the same kind of man? With Claudius and Nero, their true natures were fairly obvious, and there was need only for a simple narrative. The Latin of these books, therefore, is much simpler. We must not, however, claim a return to Ciceronian standard, for this is not the case.

His two large works, the *Histories* and the *Annals*, are perhaps the greatest achievement of Latin historiography. They display an insight into the minds of men, into the workings of government, into the

power politics of an empire, as well as a belief in the power of communication, that are unrivaled by either Sallust or Livy. The only ancient author who can match Tacitus is Thucydides. It would be interesting to know what Quintilian's judgment would have been when, in the tenth book of his *Institutio Oratoria*, he paired historians, linking Livy with Herodotus and Sallust with Thucydides. Had Quintilian written some twenty years later, he would surely have replaced Sallust with a man who was perhaps his own former student. He might well have been dismayed to realize how far Tacitus had gone beyond the career that he had originally pursued and had developed a style unlike that which Quintilian considered perfect and most eminent, that of Cicero. Beyond question Tacitus would have been ranked as foremost of Rome's historians.

3. Style and Language

Tacitus was an admirer of and successor to C. Sallustius Crispus, whom he describes as "that most admirable Roman historian" (*rerum Romanarum florentissimus auctor*, *Ann.* 3.30). Sallust wrote in the years dominated by Caesar in politics, by Cicero in impact upon the Latin language, and in the early years of the Second Triumvirate. His works comprised the *Bellum Catilinae*, the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, and the *Historiae*, a much larger-scale undertaking than his earlier works. It survives only in fragments, which give a good sense of the kind of monograph it was and its substantial quality. Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, written about 95, does not hesitate to match Sallust with Thucydides in his survey of literature (*nec opponere Thucydidī Sallustium uerear*, 10.1.101) and then speaks of his "rapidity of style not to be forgotten" (*immortalem uelocitatem*, 10.1.102). He also mentions his "brevity and clipped style of speech" (*breuitas et abruptum sermonis genus*, 4.2.45) and warns against their use, although later he speaks in rather different terms (10.1.32).

It is these qualities that particularly mark Tacitus' style and language, producing the quality that Pliny praised so highly, *σεμνότης*, "dignity" or "majesty," which is the equivalent of *maiestas*, a dignity that raises the whole above the commonplace. Elevation is a characteristic of Tacitus' work in theme and in vocabulary. He is interested neither in the colloquial nor in the routine and often uses periphrases to avoid mentioning them. All in all, his is grand history and grand style (see Löfstedt 1958, 157–180).

This style, however, was not the same throughout his life. It changed and developed, a process that can be discerned not only from

work to work, but within works, from one part to another, particularly in the last and fullest, the *Annals*. A number of his stylistic features deserve mention. There is the deliberate choice of words that have an archaic flavor, which must have shocked many of his contemporaries. There is a poetic quality in the choice of vocabulary and in construction that calls to mind the favorite devices of Vergil and Lucan. Where synonyms exist, Tacitus invariably tends, as he becomes more mature, to prefer the less common, so that by the time of the *Annals* many words have disappeared from his vocabulary and have been supplanted by others. All these elements have shock value. They are essential for a brilliant and cutting style in which many phrases and sentences can be plucked from context. His *sententiae* often have more than immediate validity and in their judgments become universal in application to the human condition (see Sinclair 1995).

Further, the style is a “pointed” one. This means a certain tension is brought about not only by choice of words but by their position in contrast or in supplement so that a powerful effect follows and vigorously strikes the reader’s senses. His sentences are often quite long, ignoring *breuitas*, and he frequently delights in attaching ablatives, particularly absolutes, at the end of what seems to be a full and complete thought, so that the sentence reels onward with subordinate construction depending upon subordinate construction long after one originally thought that the whole would have come to an end. These additions often have great psychological power since they furnish a kind of inevitability to what is to come. Again, he often speaks in different places and in different tones about events still in the offing. In the earlier instances he is frequently unclear about what will happen, yet the intimation as one reads is that what did occur was the only possible occurrence. As one looks back, one sees that the ultimate outcome was indeed forecast.

Tacitus has often been complimented for his psychology. He is, perhaps above all other Roman writers, *the* virtuoso in the handling of the psychology of characters and of mood of narrative. His subject is, on the whole, a somber one; perhaps the beginning of the *Historiae* suits his entire corpus, a difficult work full of bloodshed and war. Yet even beyond that he is able in his narrative to mold the mood of his readers by his subtle choice of potent words. Such are *arcanus* (*Hist.* 1.4.2), *dominatio* (*Ann.* 1.3.1), and *capax* (*Hist.* 1.49.4).

These are not the only words that could be cited. Their repetition and subtle use undergird the entire corpus of Tacitus’ work, with the result that they are potent factors in particular passages but also part of the historian’s psychological and philosophical development over some twenty years.

4. Tacitus in Later Times

Early in the second century CE, Tacitus' friend Pliny the Younger prophesied that his writings would be immortal (*Ep.* 7.33.1). Tacitus, he claims, is writing for all time: *scriptorum tuorum aeternitas* (*Ep.* 6.16.2). Alas, this prophecy proved to be wrong, if we can believe an anecdote about the emperor Tacitus, who reigned for six months in 275–276. He stated that he was a descendant of the historian and was distressed that so few copies of the latter's works existed. He therefore ordered that ten copies be made each year and deposited in public libraries (*HA Tacitus* 10.3). The impact of this publishing program could at best have been minimal.

There is no question but that Tacitus' style is hard and frequently difficult to understand; even many Romans must have found it so. Further, historical analysis was, and remains, a treacherous enterprise; in Horace's words, the historian undertakes a task full of great risk and treads on fires lurking beneath the ashes (*Carm.* 2.1.1–8), while biography offered amusement along with information. Two of Tacitus' contemporaries, Suetonius and Plutarch, foreshadowed the trend of "historical" studies for several centuries to come.

Throughout the remainder of classical antiquity, there are only scattered references to Tacitus' works. Examples are Sulpicius Severus in the early fifth century, who cites the *Histories* in connection with Christianity, and, in the same century, the Gaul Sidonius Apollinaris, who mentions Tacitus as a historian inferior to one of his own friends. Some of these references are valuable because they allude to or give us information about parts of his work that are now lost. All in all, however, they are a very mixed bag. There are many instances where one may assume that an author was familiar with Tacitus, but there is no evidence to confirm it.

From this point on there is practically nothing for a span of almost three centuries. Indeed, from 650 to 850 the age is totally dark. Then there is evidence that Tacitus survives and is read in the great religious community of Fulda in Germany. It is in Fulda and nearby cities such as Hersfeld that much of Tacitus' heritage is preserved. Thereafter, very little is known until the eleventh century. The manuscripts that survive, although few in number, can largely be dated to this period, indicating a revival of interest. The first impact of Tacitus upon the Renaissance is linked with the great figure of Boccaccio, who knew and read the manuscript known as the Second Medicean, which contains *Annals* 11–16 and *Histories* 1–5. Somehow Boccaccio was able, perhaps even dishonestly, to remove this eleventh-century manuscript from the library of Monte Cassino around 1360, and it therefore became known to a wider audience.

The minor works, the *Agricola*, the *Germania*, and the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, are transmitted in a manuscript from Hersfeld that was brought to Italy about 1455. The *editio princeps* of Tacitus' works, which appeared in Venice about 1470, included the material of the Second Medicean manuscript and two of the works preserved in the Hersfeldensis. The third, *Agricola*, was delayed for a dozen years, and it was not until 1509 that the First Medicean, which contains the first six books of the *Annals*, became known. The first edition that included these books was published in 1515 (see Mellor 1995 and Murgia in this volume).

The history of Tacitus' impact upon thought in the West is extremely varied. There are periods in which he is valued in his own right; there are others in which his importance stems from the fact that he can be interpreted symbolically, one way or another, to represent authors and thoughts that have been proscribed. He is a natural match for Machiavelli, although Machiavelli did not know the Tiberian books and referred little to the remainder of Tacitus' work. When Machiavelli was placed on the Index late in the sixteenth century, Tacitus became his surrogate, read by many as an outspoken opponent of monarchy and absolutism. Yet one of the anomalies of the reading of Tacitus is that he is a handbook of both monarchists and anti-monarchists. He shows how good men can live under government that is dangerous and destructive of human capacity and also how terrible tyranny can be both for the ruler and for his subjects. His impact was particularly strong in Italy and the Low Countries (the latter because of their violent opposition to Spain), where he became a symbol of resistance to unjust rule (see Schellhase 1976; Syme 1960).

The high point of Tacitean influence was the century from 1580 to 1680, the Age of the Baroque, and it may be that the enthusiasm for exuberance and rococo typified by this type of architecture and sculpture was also engendered by the virtuosity of Tacitus' prose. The number of editions of his works produced in this period is unparalleled in the history of his survival. He was studied, edited, and explained by many of the most renowned scholars and public figures of the day. A little bit later Tacitus became one of the "founding fathers" of the American nation, with Adams and Jefferson in the forefront of his enthusiasts, with the translation of Thomas Gordon making Tacitus available to those who could not read the original (see Burke 1969; Benario 1976–1977).

There then ensues a substantial slackening of interest and appeal. As the intellectual and political climates of Europe changed, Tacitus' importance waned, particularly among the ruling classes. Napoleon perhaps best exemplified the disdain of rulers for the historian. On separate occasions he claimed, "Tacite ... calomnie l'Empire" and

“Tacite! Ne me parlez pas de ce pamphlétaire. Il a calomnié les empereurs.” He further described Tacitus as a “détracteur de l’humanité.” Here is a major instance of the then common criticism that Tacitus describes people as being worse than they are (see von Stackelberg 1960, 239–244).

During much of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, Tacitus was generally out of favor. It was World War II that marked a real watershed in the development of Tacitean studies. The moral judgments of earlier times, such as Napoleon’s, lost their validity. No longer could it be said that Tacitus’ treatment of mankind was too gloomy, too cruel to human aspirations, too ungenerous in the probing of motives. The world had, alas, deeply experienced the brutality of people and individuals toward others. The two-thirds of a century since 1945 have proven to be another golden age for Tacitus, with many significant publications and invocation of him in political conflicts, exemplified by a poster widely disseminated in Rome in 1967, in opposition to the Vietnam War, with a skull displayed against an American flag and the line in large type, HANNO FATTO UN DESERTO E LO HANNO CHIAMATO PACE, which, with change of tense, recalls Tacitus’ famous statement “they make a solitude and call it peace” (*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*, Ag. 30.5). As in the sixteenth century and in the eighteenth, Tacitus is again in the forefront of classical authors. Difficult to read and often to understand he may sometimes be, but the rewards justify the labors.

NOTE

1. Translations are the author’s unless otherwise indicated.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The number of publications on Tacitus seems to rise steadily. The surveys of “recent work” by Benario (1964–1965b, 1969–1970, 1977–1978, 1986–1987, 1995–1996, 2004–2005), Sage (1990), and Suerbaum (1990) will furnish guidance. The most significant book on Tacitus ever written is Syme’s (1958), the still standard texts and commentaries on the *Annals* are those of Furneaux (1896, 1907) and Koestermann (1963–1968). More recent treatments of individual books are those of Goodyear (1972, 1981) for 1 and 2, Woodman and Martin (1996) for 3, Martin and Woodman (1989) and Shotter (1989) for 4, Martin (2001) for 5 and 6. The latter half of the *Annals* has been

comparatively neglected; see Benario (1983) for 11 and 12 and Miller (1973) for 15. Much the best translation is that of Woodman (2004), with the venerated version of Church and Brodribb (1942) still useful and popular after more than a century.

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PART II: Historiography

7

*Tacitus' Sources*¹

David S. Potter

Having described the trials after Sejanus' execution, Tacitus wrote:

I am not unaware that the perils and punishments of many have been left out by many writers, either because they wearied from the number, or because they feared lest those events which were too numerous and too sad for themselves would afflict their readers with equal disgust. Many things seem worthy of record to me even though they are ignored by others.

(*Ann.* 6.7.5)

In the early years of serious Tacitean scholarship, Philippe Fabia understood these lines as characteristic of Tacitus' technique and his handling of sources (Fabia 1893, 397–398, 411). He thought Tacitus used one principal source for Books 1 to 11 of the *Annals* and another, Cluvius Rufus, from Book 12 onwards and that he controlled these principal sources with a wide range of other accounts, including documentary records. In Fabia's view, what Tacitus means at *Annals* 6.7.5 is that one person had all the names and others repeated only a few of them. Although Fabia's argument has not survived the test of time – the great lost historian of the early principate who was, for him, unknown, is better understood to be non-existent – he was correct in perceiving that Tacitus was writing against a well-established tradition. Tacitus saw himself in a constant dialogue with the historical consciousness of members of the governing class whom he saw as his primary audience, following different strands of the tradition with varying degrees of interest. Tacitus knew full well that the “many writers” who had told the tale had established what would essentially be the tone of the story. In the opening lines of the *Annals*

he had said as much – those who wrote while an emperor lived were prone to the grossest flattery, those who wrote once he was dead wrote under the influence of recent hatreds (*Ann.* 1.1.2; this understanding of Tacitus’ engagement with earlier tradition is essentially that of Syme 1958). In the happy age during which Tacitus purported to write – and it is significant that he wrote from the perspective of a man who, as the son-in-law of a famous general, distinguished advocate and governor of Asia was deeply implicated in the regime of his own time – the tenor of Julio-Claudian history was set. Although “many writers” might not choose to tell all – and the phrase itself is problematic in Tacitean diction – people would tell roughly the same story in roughly the same way. Tiberius was a brute, and it was bad form to chortle at his senatorial victims (unless they deserved it).

The history of power at Rome that Tacitus chose to write was also the history of the governing class, and a sort of history could become very personal very fast. The Roman aristocrat represented for Tacitus, and one presumes for his audience, not only the family in the current generation, but also family reputation, past and future (for Tacitus’ understanding of the Roman aristocracy in this light see O’Gorman 2000, 59–62; see also Luce 1991, 2916–2922, on Tacitus’ sense of his readership). That is why one had to be careful and why Tacitus would write:

He [Nero] brought the descendants of noble families – men for sale by reason of poverty – on to the stage; I will not name those who are now dead; I think that respect is due to their ancestors.

(*Ann.* 14.14.3)

The names were there to be had if he had wanted to produce them, and many probably had an idea whom he was protecting, and who, indeed, in the *Histories* were some legates of the Vitellian legions who are never mentioned. Given that deliberate omission was allowable for the historian, it is significant Tacitus is willing to observe the granting of *ornamenta triumphalia* to the future emperor, Nerva, as a praetor designate in the wake of the Pisonian conspiracy of 65 (*Ann.* 15.72.1). The reason why is not at all evident from the preceding narrative, but the reference to Nerva here is an undoubted compliment to the current emperor (surely at this point Hadrian), who claimed adoptive descent (though it is a bit hard at this distance to know why; for the date of Tacitus, see Birley 2000). For Tacitus, self-conscious and public selectivity was a way of expanding the message of the text, connecting with the audience and maintaining what he saw to be the dignity of the subject, as when he notes:

[w]hen Nero, for the second time, and Lucius Piso were consuls;

little happened that was worthy of record, unless it is pleasing to someone to fill volumes by praising the foundations and boards with which Caesar built the mass of an amphitheater on the campus Martius, when it should be the case that, in accord with the dignity of the Roman people, important things should be found in the annals, and such things should fill the daily record of events in the city.

(*Ann.* 13.31.1)

Similarly, in reporting events in the reign of Tiberius, he told his audience:

I have decided not to record opinions spoken in the Senate unless they are outstanding for their responsibility or of memorable disgrace because I think that it is the particular duty of the historian not to pass over virtuous deeds in silence and so that there should be fear and shame for disgraceful words and deeds.

(*Ann.* 3.65.1)

For Tacitus, author and audience were joined in a comprehensive process of analysis; people could have their own specific memories of things that might or might not contribute to the collective memory of the governing class, and in both cases the audience might be expected to recognize Tacitus' adaptation of a historian's trope as old as the Elder Cato's statement that he would not include the boring sort of stuff once included in the pontifical Annals (Cato fr. 77 *HRRel* = Beck and Walter 2005; Cato 4, 1 with Rouvert 1991, 3059). Thus Tacitus could say he "remembered hearing from his elders" about the document that allegedly contained the *mandata* of Tiberius against Germanicus that Piso had brought with him to court (*Ann.* 3.16.1). It was a part of the collective class memory. Elsewhere he would ask his audience to stop believing things that were obviously stupid – e.g., that Tiberius would have poisoned Drusus – on the grounds that if they would think about what was likely true or false they might expect the same from the emperor (*Ann.* 4.11). Tacitus' work is replete with suggestions about how different people might have understood something, at times with indications (e.g., the location of an option as the third element in a tricolon) as to what more reasonable people would have concluded (see in general the perceptive discussion in Hausmann 2009). Tacitus' own procedure, as evidenced by passages such as the ones just quoted, was to determine what should be in the narrative and then work up individual episodes as he saw fit. Thus, when he wrote to Pliny about the death of his uncle, he did so because he had already decided he would describe the uncle's death in an account he had already decided he should write about the eruption of Vesuvius. He later asked Pliny what he was doing that day (Plin., *Ep.*

6.16; 20). Pliny's understanding that it was Tacitus' practice to work from episode to episode, drawing on a variety of sources when he chose to, is likewise reflected in his decision to write about his role in the extortion trial of Baebius Massa:

I will therefore describe an event, although it could not possibly have escaped your attention since it is in the public records, nonetheless I describe it so that you will know all the more how sweet it would be for me in the time to come, if you will promote my action, the importance of which increased as a result of the danger, by the witness of your genius.

(Ep. 7.33.3)

Properly done, history improved contemporary discourse and enhanced reputations. Pliny is unlikely to have been the only person to volunteer information of an entirely self-serving sort, and Cluvius Rufus' request that Verginius Rufus not be angry with him if he should find some things in the history he was writing that displeased him is a reflection of the Roman understanding of the problem of writing contemporary history (Plin., Ep. 9.10.5). The Younger Pliny asserts he dissuaded himself from writing the history of his own time, *intacta et noua*, because it would give offense (Plin., Ep. 5.8.11). At the same time he understood the act of writing the history of the past involved careful scrutiny of various accounts, *onerosa collatio*. Even Pliny understood historical writing to be a particular branch of rhetoric, that forensic oratory and history had much in common, but also much to distinguish them. Forensic oratory dealt with the quotidian. History discussed the significant and in a higher style, for Thucydides had already made the point that history was a possession for all time, not a prize oration for the here and now (Plin., Ep. 5.8.8–11). The need for style would not, however, excuse him from doing his best to arrive at a narrative that people would recognize as being accurate. When Tacitus asked Pliny to describe the death of his uncle, he did so in order to describe the event "more truthfully" (Plin., Ep. 6.16.1: *petis, ut tibi auunculi mei exitum scribam, quo uerius tradere posteris possis*, "you ask me to write you of the death of my uncle, so that you can hand it down to posterity more truthfully"). The intended audience for this account included the source of his information.

Since the process of composition for Tacitus and other historians was a dynamic process of mediation between past accounts and present audience, the analysis of Tacitus' "sources" cannot be undertaken as a form of literary prosopography. Although we know the names of some of those who wrote the history of the Julio-Claudian era and who composed accounts of 69 CE, it is not plausible to assert that we can know all of his sources or even which sources

necessarily said what (the fundamental discussion of these texts remains Syme 1958, 176–190, 271–303). A reasoned account of the obvious sources of the *Annals* alone reveals the use of more than sixty literary texts ranging from the works of men whom Tacitus regarded as major historians to works such as philosophic compositions by Seneca that were employed in shaping the dialogue that Tacitus invented between Nero and the philosopher as he was seeking permission to retire (see the excellent discussion of the stylistic aspects in Koestermann 1963–1968 Vol. 4, 126–137; Devillers 2003, 52–53). In addition, there are more than seventy places in which Tacitus appears to have made direct use of the records of the Senate and others where he alludes to monuments (notably the *Res Gestae*), the record of events in the city, and – as in the case of Piso – oral tradition (Devillers 2003, 6–73; for the *Res Gestae* see his p. 72 n. 654; for Tacitus and the monuments of Rome, see Rouvert 1991).

Tacitus was certainly not the first historian to use a wide range of sources – Livy’s account of the Bacchanalian affair in 186 BCE derives from an earlier version that deployed documents, and Livy himself makes plain (if usually inept) use of documentary evidence. For the earlier empire there is considerable evidence in Cassius Dio’s account that at least one of Tacitus’ sources was also at home in the archives (Briscoe 2008, 230–290, is a thorough analysis of the Bacchanalian tradition; for Dio see Matthews 2010, 68). Tacitus himself notes, at one point, that he had found records of letters read in the Senate in “certain senatorial authors” (*Ann.* 2.88.1 with Fabia 1893, 409; for the nature of the *acta* and their use by other historians of the senatorial period see Talbert 1984, 308–334). Reference to documents was plainly something Tacitus’ audience would have expected, and one may reasonably read his comments on the virtue of not saying everything as a sign that his audience would have been familiar with accounts of the Julio-Claudian age that were more verbose than his own. Josephus’ deliciously detailed description of the death of Caligula derives from one of these. Tacitus himself seems to have taken over the debate over the identity of Galba’s killer from his (and Plutarch’s and Suetonius’) source in a way that reflected the original author’s own reference to multiple traditions (*Hist.* 1.41.3, indisputably a true statement as it stood; Damon 2003, 27). Tacitus’ “some writers” who discussed the possibility that the troops would lay down their arms rather than fight for Otho and Galba included the source of Plutarch’s *Life of Otho* who said the same thing, and there is good reason to think that Tacitus’ contribution at this point was simply a pair of digressions, one reasoning that a man like Suetonius Paulinus was much too smart to think any such thing and the other on the nature of civil war itself. In other cases “many people” may say

something not because “many people” have written it, but rather because many people have read the same thing. In the case of Galba’s death there is reason to think that in repeating the earlier literary tradition he is in fact referring to an account shaped by that predecessor – hence phrases like “it is not sufficiently established” (*non satis constat*) and “it is reported by rumor” (*fama traditur*), which serve to generalize the belief beyond the text (the issue with “false plurals” is well put in Fabia 1893, 408; I owe the discussion of the specific language in this case to a discussion with Mr. Matt Newman).

Given that Tacitus was not unusual in his use of multiple sources, the important question is not so much “what were the sources of Tacitus?” as – in cases where Tacitus is not just reflecting leftover conundra in the tradition – “how did he evaluate and use them?” Pliny speaks of *onerosa collatio*, and Tacitus may be seen, in his correspondence with Pliny, as indulging in one version of *collatio* by collecting multiple accounts of a single event. But, while *collatio* necessarily involves the juxtaposing of versions, the process does not dictate the form that the conclusion will take. In Tacitus’ case, the results of *collatio* appear to vary between summary, aggregation, suppression, and supplementation. The most obvious narrative difficulty that arose during composition was collocation – the placement of simultaneous events derived from very different sources, and there are times when he got things wrong.

The most straightforward response any historian can have to any account is simply to summarize it. It is most obvious that Tacitus engages in simple summarization of a single source in year-end obituary notices and relatively short accounts of events that took place in the Senate for which the *acta senatus* are the most likely source. The speech of Claudius about the reduction in the tribute of Cos is a case in point. After summarizing a discourse in which Claudius stated that descendants of Asclepius were notable doctors and that his own doctor, Xenophon, was a member of the family, a fact that justified relief from tribute and recognition of the right of asylum, Tacitus notes “the many merits of the people with respect to the Roman people could have been included and victories won in association with Rome” might have been mentioned. He does not bother to elaborate because he is commenting in his own right on a speech that underscored Claudius’ persistent identification of the welfare of the palace with that of the state as a whole (*Ann.* 12.61). In a somewhat different case involving a story derived from a literary source, very close verbal parallels between what Tacitus and Dio have to say make it appear that Tacitus has adapted some lines almost verbatim from a source to use as a transition from the murder of Rubellius Plautus to the affairs of Corbulo:

Dio 62.19.4–20.1: οὗτος οὖν ὁ Κορβούλων ἄκοντι τὰ Ἀρτάξατα λαβὼν τὴν πόλιν κατέσκαψε. πράξας δὲ τοῦτο πρὸς τὰ Τιγρανόκερτα ἤλασε, πάσης μὲν τῆς τῶν ἐνδιδόντων σφᾶς χῶρας φειδόμενος, πάντα δὲ τὰ τῶν ἀνθισταμένων πορθῶν ...

Dio 62.19.4–20.1: Corbulo having taken Tacitus, *Ann.* 14.23.1: Thus Corbulo, having Artaxata without opposition, destroyed the destroyed Artaxata, thinking to make use of city. This exploit finished, he marched in the the recent terror for capturing Tigranocerta ... direction of Tigranocerta, sparing all the therefore the Roman general varied his districts that yielded but devastating the lands methods, using pity with those who of all such as resisted him ... surrendered, speed against those who fled.

Even the greater compression of Dio's account cannot occlude the impression both he and Tacitus have followed the same source so closely that the ordering of the thought within individual clauses has been retained. In *Annals* 11.14–15, it appears Tacitus has summarized two Claudian orations, one on the alphabet, another on the haruspices. He does not comment on the content of either; rather they serve as digressions convergent upon a subtle point. The source of this material is identified as the emperor, whose own intervention in the affairs of state may be regarded as being equally relevant to the story of his reign (while he was blathering on about such things, his wife was taking various lovers behind his back and the imperial freedmen were actually running the state; see also Hausmann 2009, 208–216). Sometimes summary could be a very powerful tool.

Summarization by its very nature involves the adaptation of a single source; aggregation is the process of combining separate accounts without necessarily identifying the original sources. From the perspective of a modern historian seeking to know precisely what happened at some point in Roman history, this may be seen as Tacitus' most troubling habit, especially as it is routinely employed in the most significant of his set pieces where he seeks to put his particular stamp on a complex story. The death of Agrippina is a case in point. After describing the assassination itself and quoting a short version of her final words, he says that "these things are set out in accord with consensus"; the matter open to doubt was whether Nero then showed up to discuss his mother's physical attributes (*Ann.* 14.9.1; for a provocative discussion of Agrippina's last words, see Ihrig 2007, 339–341). This was scarcely the only thing about which people might disagree. According to Tacitus, Anicetus designed the fatal boat; according to Dio, Nero decided that a collapsible boat could be used after seeing one in the theater (*Ann.* 14.3.3; Dio 62.12.2). Suetonius agrees with Tacitus, and, it seems, the author of the *Octavia*, that weights were attached to the structure under which Agrippina sat (Tac., *Ann.* 14.5.1; Suet., *Nero* 34.2; [Sen.], *Oct.* 318). Dio says the

ship used for the final journey was the one that brought Agrippina from Antium to Baiae; Tacitus says Nero showed the boat to her for the first time after they had their final dinner. Only Suetonius says that the ship that transported Agrippina to Baiae was damaged after Agrippina's arrival in an "accident," so Nero could get her on board the boat that took her on her final ride (Tac., *Ann.* 14.4.3; Dio 62.12.3; Suet., *Nero* 34.2). No one notes at this point that Otho provided the final dinner, a point that seems only to have interested Suetonius when he came to write Otho's biography, but this is scarcely the only piece of Othonian biography that seems to have been of no interest to authors of the master narrative. It is to the Elder Pliny we owe our knowledge of Otho's instruction of Nero in the art of foot perfuming (Suet., *Otho* 3.1; Plin., *Nat.* 13.22; for more on Othonian perfuming see Plut., *Galba* 19.2–3. Tacitus does not mention Seneca's affection for Otho, on which see Plut., *Galba* 20.1).

The radical, and at times politically motivated, variations in the story provide a context in which, for the Neronian books at least, Tacitus could directly discuss the merits of his sources. Thus, in recounting the very odd effort of Domitia to get Agrippina killed, Tacitus notes the differing views of three major historians of the period. Despite his statement that he will follow their consensus where available and give divergences under the name of each, he does this but twice (and in one case only by implication; Tac., *Ann.* 13.20 with 14.2; 15.61 with Devillers 2003, 23–24). The key point seems to have been that if Seneca could be shown to have been an honorable man serving a dreadful emperor, then other men could have claimed that they were following his example. If Seneca could be shown to be corrupt, then those who claimed him as their model would lose credibility.

Tacitus was well aware of the stakes involved in defending the reputation of an imperial favorite and the way it shaped the discourse of a succeeding regime. He had witnessed similar behavior in the wake of Domitian's assassination, and he recorded a profoundly important discussion of what it meant to be a servant of the state when he allowed Eprius Marcellus to debate Helvidius Priscus in the Senate in the fourth book of the *Histories*. Helvidius may have had justice on his side when he claimed that a man like Eprius, who was implicated in some of Nero's most notable crimes (e.g., the forced suicide of Thrasea Paetus), should not be allowed to represent the Senate on an embassy to Vespasian. Eprius won the debate and got the best line. "We pray," he said, "for good emperors and deal with what we get" (*Hist.* 4.8.2; for the period after the death of Domitian see Plin., *Ep.* 9.13). In his *Dialogue on the Orators*, Tacitus had one of his speakers, Aper, draw attention to Eprius' effort and being an

especially brilliant example of contemporary rhetoric (*Dial.* 5).

Aggregation simplifies a complex tradition and seems to be used in cases where Tacitus might either not be terribly interested or feel that he could say what he thinks because readers would be bored to death if he explained his choices – the account that he gives is plainly related to earlier accounts – or that he might as well decide for himself as certainty in the face of significant irreconcilable difference was not plausible. Still, the audience gets a sense of a deeper story to which critical judgment has been applied.

Suppression is more insidious than aggregation. In some cases it might simply involve the improvement of a well-known *sententia*, as in the case of the judgments that Tacitus offers on Galba and Otho, which echo (and improve) comments in other authors (Plut., *Galba* 29.2; Suet., *Galba* 14.1; Tac., *Hist.* 49.4 with Damon 2003, 200–201; Plut., *Otho* 18; Suet., *Otho* 12.2; Dio 63.15.2; Tac., *Hist.* 2.50.1 with Martin 1981, 83). In other cases it may involve decisions to omit discussion of difference and suggest greater consistency than was in fact the case. In describing the celebration of the completion of the work to drain the Fucine Lake, Tacitus selects details in a way that would separate his version from those of his sources. Thus, while everyone recalled Agrippina's golden dress, Suetonius says that the conflict involved twelve triremes, Cassius Dio says that there were fifty ships on each side, Tacitus says that there were quadremes as well as triremes and nineteen thousand men engaged. He does not mention the famous salute of the condemned which, being in both Dio and Suetonius, suggests that some reference to multiple versions of the story might have been expected (Suet., *Claud.* 21.6; Plin., *Nat.* 33.63; Dio 60.33.4; Tac., *Ann.* 12.56.2–3). Similarly, in the case of the Armenian embassy of 54 CE, it is clear that while Tacitus follows the same source as Dio very closely, he has elected to change a significant detail:

Dio 61.3–4: πρεσβείας Ἀρμενίων
ἐλθούσης καὶ ἡ Ἀγριππῖνα ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα,
ἀφ' οὗ σφίσιν ὁ Νέρων διελέγετο,
ἀναβῆναι ἠθέλησεν. ἰδόντες οὖν
αὐτὴν ἐκεῖνοι πλησιάζουσιν ἔπεισαν
τὸν νεανίσκον προκαταβῆναι καὶ
προαπαντῆσαι τῇ μητρὶ ὥς καὶ ἐπὶ
δεξιῶσι τινί. πραχθέντος τε τούτου
οὔτε τότε ἐπανῆλθον, ἐμβαλόντες τινὰ
αἰτίαν, ὥστε μὴ καὶ ἐς τοὺς βαρβάρους
τὸ νόσημα τῆς ἀρχῆς ἐκφανῆναι, καὶ
μετὰ τοῦτ' ἔπραττον ὅπως μὴδὲν ἔτ'
αὐτῇ τῶν κοινῶν ἐπιτρέπηται.

Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.5.2: *quin et legatis
Armeniorum causam gentis apud Neronem
orantibus escendere suggestum imperatoris
et praesidere simul parabat, nisi ceteris
pauore defixis Seneca admonuisset, uenienti
matri occurrere. ita specie pietatis obuiam
itum dedecori.*

Dio 61.3–4: An embassy of the Armenians Tacitus, *Ann.* 13.5.2: when some

had arrived and Agrippina wished to mount ambassadors of the Armenians were the tribunal from which Nero was speaking pleading the cause of their nation to Nero, with them. Seeing her approach, they she was prepared to ascend the tribunal persuaded the young man to descend and and preside were it not that Seneca, when receive her as if giving a special greeting and everyone else was transfixed with terror, then, when this was done, they did not then advised him to meet his approaching mother ascend the tribunal making some excuse, so and then with a show of filial devotion get in that the weakness in the empire did not the way of that shame. become apparent to the foreigners; and after this they worked to ensure that she was not entrusted with any affairs of state.

The omission of Burrus here would seem to correspond to the prejudice of Fabius Rusticus, who would not be introduced for a number of chapters (*Ann.* 14.4.3).

Suppression is also evident in accounts of two significant imperial deaths (implying greater certainty on the author's part than might have been reasonable). In describing Claudius' death, Tacitus observes that writers at the time said he had eaten a poisoned mushroom and that when it looked like he might survive, Agrippina administered a fatal dose of poison with a feather (*Ann.* 12.67). Suetonius was not so sure. He knew one story to the effect that Halotus the Taster poisoned the emperor at a feast with the priests on the Capitoline and that those who held that he was poisoned at home disagreed as to whether he died after suffering severe pain all evening, or if, having vomited up the poison, he was done in by a second dose which he had received mixed with some food or through a syringe. In Dio's version he eats the mushroom prepared by Agrippina and evidently falls into a coma (Suet., *Claud.* 44; Dio 60.34.3). If many authors of the time told the story as Tacitus did, it is also quite obvious that some did not and that this is concealed through the process of composition. No one reading Tacitus' account of the funeral honors for Germanicus would imagine that an extensive reorganization of the *comitia centuriata* was included (even though the text otherwise follows the order of an original document rather closely) or, reading about Vonones' effort to have himself installed on the throne of Armenia in 19 CE, that Calpurnius Piso could seriously be thought to have been involved (for the text see now Crawford 1996 n. 37; for the connection with Tacitus see Potter 1987 and the important discussion in Bérard 1991, 3036–3040). Tacitus makes it very clear he thinks the only Roman involved was Vibius Fronto, the erstwhile commander of the guard assigned to keep Vonones in Antioch and the man who killed Vonones once he had been apprehended as he tried to make his way to Armenia. Even then Tacitus allows doubt. For the Senate in 20 CE the charge that Vonones had bribed Piso and thereby almost caused a war was of great significance and appears to have been proved – something that might be alluded to by Tacitus when he notes that all the charges against

Piso stuck, except that of poisoning (*Ann.* 2.68; 3.14.1; *SCP* 37–45 with Eck, Caballos, and Fernández 1996, 162–167).

The case of Boudicca perhaps is the most significant case of suppression, for it is linked with a Tacitean tendency to explain internal unrest as a result of fiscal oppression (often with some suggestion of mismanagement by equestrian officials). The revolt of Florus and Sacovir stemmed from high debt burden; the rebellion of the Batavians from the oppressive conduct of the *primuspilis* who was sent to collect taxes; the rebellion in Judaea was intimately connected with mismanagement by equestrian officials over time (*Ann.* 3.40.1, 4.72.2; *Hist.* 5.3). In the *Agricola* Tacitus allowed that the great British revolt stemmed from the folly of the Britons who wished to recover ancestral freedom while the governor was away. Boudicca then appears on the scene as a powerful woman who just happens to be available to take charge. In the *Annals* the provincial procurator Decianus Catus' brutal treatment of Boudicca is the spark that enflames the latent discontent of the tribes. Cassius Dio's statement that the revolt stemmed from the sudden calling in of loans by Seneca plainly descends from an earlier tradition in which Seneca's role in government was important to the overall interpretation of Nero's reign rather than an account specifically concerned with affairs in Britain (*Ag.* 15–16; *Ann.* 14.31; Dio 62.2.1). Tacitus does not allow any alternative to the explanation that he offers, but he knew Suetonius Paulinus, at least through *Agricola*, and there is no reason to think that Paulinus' *Memoirs* did not extend to the end of the British campaign (*HRRel* 2: 101; for doubts about the extent of the work see Devillers 2003, 39; for the view adopted here see Syme 1958, 297, 395). As we have it, the Tacitean explanation is probably Paulinian, and quite probably from his memoirs. Tacitus would seem also to draw attention to a written source when he seems to cast some doubt upon the number slain in the final battle when he writes that "there are those who say that scarcely fewer than 80,000 Britons died." Is this another case where a plural verb of communication conceals a unique authority (*Ann.* 14.37.2)? Is this also a point where criticism of an account on a subsidiary point might draw attention to the critical acumen of a historian who accepted controversial aspects of that account on other issues?

The methods so far discussed were all of use to a historian who needed to simplify a complex tradition. Supplementation was a technique that would enable a historian to leave his own stamp on a narrative. Supplementation could involve the composition of digressions that could enable an audience to understand, from the perspective of the historian, the significance of seemingly unimportant events (an important theme for Tacitus, or so he says). Another form

of supplementation was the use of archival material to fill in gaps that appeared as a result of different choices made by predecessors, sometimes by returning to the same archive and quoting it more fully and sometimes by selecting other material. Tacitus evidently had his own view about the way that the reign of Tiberius unfolded, that it went steadily downhill as people Tiberius feared dropped dead. Some might think the turning point in Tiberius' reign took place in 19 CE with the death of Germanicus. Tacitus did not think so; perhaps he had not such a rosy view of Germanicus as others (at times he seems to question the tradition of Germanicean virtue, albeit subtly), perhaps he knew more about the unsavory people with whom Germanicus associated – people like Lucius Vitellius and Suillius, both of whom were appalling under Claudius (Ross 1973 remains the most sophisticated reading; for a survey of other analyses, see Pelling 1993). Whatever the case, he saw the great turning point in 23 CE when Drusus died and Sejanus emerged as the regime's dominant agent. He says as much at the beginning of Book 4, but to get from the trial of Piso, then accepted as the end of the story of Germanicus, to the year 23 required work (Syme 1973 is fundamental on this point). The accounts of 21 and 22 CE are replete with signs of direct archival research, which include extensive speeches quoted from the *acta senatus* without record of what people were thinking or what they looked like (the discussion of Hortalus' plea for support in 16 CE, where the non-verbal response of senators to Tiberius is recorded, offers a point of contrast), more digressions based upon moments in the *acta*, and some carelessness, as in the case of Caesius Cordus, who is said to have been brought to trial on a charge of corruption and treason on behalf of the people of Crete in 21 and convicted in 22 (only of extortion). The trial evidently took place in the praetorian *quaestio de repetundis* (*Ann.* 3.38.1, 70.1; on Hortalus, see *Ann.* 2.38.4).

If the later part of Book 3 stands as an exemplary use of archival material for narrative effect, it also reveals much about the way that material could, in the hands of other historians, come into the tradition. Much of the post-20 CE material in Book 3 bears telltale signs of the direct use of material that concentrated upon the spoken word rather than reactions to those words. Signs that earlier authors had been interested in the event would tend to include statements about what the *princeps* looked like or how people reacted that would not come straight out of the record of the Senate – e.g., that the defendant was terrified by the immobile *uultus* of the *princeps*, or that an individual realized from the emperor's expression that he had offended (*Ann.* 3.15.2; see the useful discussion in Ihrig 2007, 167–171). Suetonius' note that someone once yelled out “take or leave it” as Tiberius dithered in a meeting could not have come from the

record, which would have been taken down in shorthand and redacted into *oratio recta*, presumably under the direction of the member of the Senate charged with maintaining the record (Suet., *Tib.* 24.1; for methods of record keeping, see Potter 1996, 144–147; for the administration of the *acta*, see Talbert 1984, 310–316). Rudeness was something that a person remembered and passed on to some historian whom Suetonius happened to read, though whoever this might have been would presumably have placed the comment in its original context (the meeting of September 17, 14 CE?).

If the *acta* could not be supplemented through personal reminiscence given the time that had passed between the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius and those of Trajan and Hadrian, what was there could be improved in other ways – the fact a speech existed did not mean that Tacitus felt he needed to follow what was said very closely. As was the case with any ancient historian, he would turn another’s words into his own and, if possible, make them better. This is certainly what Tacitus did with the speech of Claudius in favor of admitting Gallic notables to the Senate. By Tacitus’ time nearly half the Senate was of provincial origin and the position that Claudius had taken was of far greater importance than it may have seemed at the time (Griffin 1982). Tacitus’ version of the speech resonated with the Hadrianic governing class, just as did his digression on the decline of old-aristocratic luxury at the end of the Julio-Claudian era in Book 3 (*Ann.* 3.55). As a member of the Senate, Tacitus would also have been aware that the process of redaction was not always word perfect. The crucial record of a meeting of the Senate in the late 170s includes a statement by a member of the Senate that he will comment, verbatim, upon things communicated by Marcus Aurelius. Comparison of what he claims the emperor said with fragments of the actual speech reveals notable omissions (for a translation of the *senatus consultum* usually dated to 177 CE on the subject of public combatants, see Potter and Mattingly 2010, 363–371).

Another form of supplementation appears to have involved adding new material to an account whose author had already had access to the *acta*, as, for instance, in the case of the discussion in the Senate after the death of Augustus. Dio’s version suggests at least one author had been interested in Asinius Gallus’ intervention, perhaps inevitably so given the fact that he was then married to Tiberius’ beloved ex-spouse. Tacitus noted the moment (and its personal significance) but adduced similar comments from others to underscore what he saw as the crucial point of the meeting – that despite requests to set forth a clear theory of imperial power, Tiberius had not done so (Matthews 2010, 67–72). In the case of Clutorius Priscus, the tradition represented by Dio seems simply to have been interested in the fact he

was executed for reciting an immensely ill-advised composition and that, since the sentence was carried out without consulting Tiberius, the emperor wrote to the Senate demanding that he be given a chance to review its sentences. Tacitus discovered Marcus Lepidus (otherwise a hero) had delivered a speech in favor of leniency and decided to include it (*Ann.* 3.50; Dio 57.20.2–4; Dio has a praenomen that Tacitus omits; see also Syme 1955).

The techniques examined so far are all connected with the composition of individual episodes and the assemblage of diverse episodes, often requiring some shifting between sources. Within episodes and within specific source traditions, Tacitus is often precise, as he is in the case of the trial of Piso where he makes the progress of the trial abundantly clear and shows how it fits into the year around the movements of Drusus. In the same year he appears to carefully place the trial of Aemilia Lepida at the end of the summer by indicating that it followed the campaign against Tacfarinas, known to Tacitus, it appears, through reports sent to the Senate (Africa being a senatorial province) and because it occurred in the context of games that might readily be identified as the *Ludi Romani* (on the date see Koestermann 1963–1968 Vol. 1, 458; Potter 1998, 453–454). All this had some basis in the *acta*. The trouble that could arise is evident at the very beginning of the *Annals* where Tacitus appears to think that Drusus was in Rome for the funeral of Augustus on September 17. He was not; rather, he was already on his way to the Balkans to deal with the mutiny that had broken out when news of Augustus' death had reached the legions, and he would be there on September 27, the date of an eclipse of the moon (not that Tacitus would have known this date; *Ann.* 1.14.4, 24.1 with Matthews 2010, 72–77). Similarly, he allows a mutineer in the Balkan army, Vibulenus, to claim that his brother, bearing communication (presumably mutinous) from the Rhine armies, had been murdered without noting that this would have been deeply improbable. Based on Tacitus' own account, the trouble on the Rhine did not break out until a bit later, since the mutiny was in early stages when the embassy that was sent as a result of senatorial action on September 17 arrived in the Rhineland (*Ann.* 1.22.1, 31, 39.1). Tacitus opens his account of 61 CE by announcing that this was the year of a great disaster in Britain, yet the logic of his own account reveals that the actual *clades* took place in the previous year (*Ann.* 14.29 with Birley 1981, 54–57). The narrative of events in Armenia that would result in Corbulo's appointment ends in 51 CE, but the invasion of Radamistus that is mentioned in this context took place in 54 CE and was connected with the Armenian embassy that so interested Agrippina in 55 CE (*Ann.* 12.50.2 with *Ann.* 13.6.1). It is notorious that the triumph of Germanicus, the celebration of which

Tacitus reports at the beginning of his account of 15 CE, is not the triumph voted in that year, but rather the one voted in 13 CE (a point about which he seems unclear, with consequent issues in much modern scholarship; *Ann.* 1.55.1 with Syme 1979, 322 = Syme 1984, 1212).

Tacitus' engagement with his sources is a matter that allows little room for ease, hope, or comfort to any who seek to study the history of the early empire. The lack of a consistent pattern in the handling of material reflects, however, the ebb and flow of Tacitus' own interests and enables his readers to grasp the way that he conceived his project at a very basic level. Thus it becomes possible to enter into the complex dialogue Tacitus constructed not only with his immediate audience, but also with the whole tradition of imperial historiography down to his own time, enabling us to grasp the dynamic process that was the practice of history at Rome. He noted the audience would not be treated to the excitement of the sort of history that Livy wrote, but the wise among them would learn the secrets of power that were his to teach.

NOTE

1. Translations are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Although influenced by the nineteenth-century interest in identifying specific lost sources, Fabia (1893) remains a very useful analysis of Tacitus' working methods. Fabia's work is extended by Devillers (2003), also a very useful book in that it recognizes that Tacitus' sources were not limited to the writings of other historians or public documents; for those documents and monuments, however, Rouvert (1991) and Bérard (1991) are important and perceptive. Talbert (1984) is now the fundamental study of the *acta senatus*, one of Tacitus' most important sources (and also a source for other historians). For study of the *Annals*, the *senatus consultum* of 20 CE concerning the trial of Gn. Calpurnius Piso and his associates is crucial and the initial publication in Eck, Caballos, and Fernández (1996) remains a vital resource. For discussion of the principle of source criticism as an analysis not so much of lost sources as of a historian's technique, see also Potter (1999), deriving especially from the fundamental work of Syme (1958) and (1973). Damon (2003) and Ash

(2007) are both excellent on the way that Tacitus adopts the material that he has in shaping his own version of events in the *Histories*. Matthews (2010) offers a masterful reading of the way that Tacitus made use of available material for his account of the accession of Tiberius. Ihrig (2007) and Hausmann (2009) are both extremely perceptive treatments of issues behind Tacitus' narrative and his connection with his audience, the former looking at Tacitus' interest in non-verbal communication (something that must have been transmitted by earlier authors who shared Tacitus' perception of the importance of such communication), while Hausmann looks in detail at the techniques that Tacitus uses to influence his audience.

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*Tacitus and Roman Historiography*¹

Arthur Pomeroy

Imagine being a member of the audience that first heard readings from Tacitus' *Histories*. The starting point is set out quite clearly in the first sentence: "The beginning of my work will be when Servius Galba (for the second time) and Titus Vinius were consuls." Next, the mention of Tacitus' lack of interaction with Galba, Otho, and Vitellius and his intention to handle impartially the Flavian emperors, while leaving Nerva and Trajan for a later date, indicates the broad scope of his project (69–96 CE). At the same time Tacitus stresses the decline of history under the imperial system after Augustus, a fault that he hopes to redress, and so places himself in opposition to earlier accounts of the period he has chosen. But, unlike a modern historian, he does not say who the writers at fault were. The listener might make a stab at the authors who were candidates for correction, but most likely he would simply have to wait until names were mentioned.

That wait would be a long time, certainly several recitations later. In the third book of the *Histories*, Tacitus, in the midst of a vivid battle scene, has the Flavian commanders, desperate to encourage their soldiers into one final effort, pointing out the prize of victory in the nearby city of Cremona (*Hist.* 3.27.3). This strategy worked, although it involved a Roman army pillaging a Roman city and the civilians inside being brutally mistreated by those who were meant to be their protectors. This was the greatest outrage of the civil wars of 69 CE.

But who was responsible? Tacitus mentions two possibilities, one offered by Messalla and the other from Gaius Plinius. Messalla will be Vipstanus Messalla, the friend of the historian who has a major part in his *Dialogue on Oratory*. Tacitus had recently mentioned him (*Hist.* 3.25.2) as his source for the tragic tale of a son who inadvertently killed his father during the rout of the Vitellian forces at the battle of Cremona. To add to the verisimilitude, Messalla could provide names for the two: Iulius Mansuetus and his Spanish-born son (presumably of

the same name). Hermann Peter in his monumental *Remains of the Roman Historians* (= *HRRel* Vol. 2, 115–116) provided Messalla with his own *Histories* on the basis of the two citations in Tacitus. But this implausible anecdote, complete with a brief speech by the son in defense of his conduct addressed to the spirit of his dead father, could easily have originally been a stand-alone production, a display piece designed to appeal to the listener's sense of wonder and pity such as we see in Pliny the Younger's brief account of the sad fate of the Hippo dolphin (*Ep.* 9.33). Messalla almost certainly concluded with a description of the universal repugnance for civil war felt by Flavian troops when the tale became known. Tacitus accepts the challenge and caps his friend's version: "Yet they were not slowed down in their killing and stripping of the corpses of their relatives, friends, and brothers: they talked about the crime that had been committed and continued to commit it themselves" (*Hist.* 3.25.3). This should put us on our guard when Messalla is cited once again, this time for blaming Hormus, the freedman of Vespasian who was representing his patron's interests during the northern Italian campaign, for suggesting the sack of Cremona.

Given Roman social snobbery, it would be nice to blame an ex-slave ("What *does* one expect from *such* people?"). Still Tacitus will not be rushed into accepting such common opinions. Indeed, it turns out that Gaius Plinius had suggested a target of blame that provided more sport than shooting at freedmen. He had pinned responsibility on Antonius Primus, the Flavian field commander. This again raises various doubts. For instance, which Gaius Plinius? Could Tacitus' audience distinguish Gaius Plinius Secundus, who famously died in the eruption of Vesuvius, from his adopted nephew, Gaius Plinius *Caecilius* Secundus, who was a literary associate of Tacitus and wrote several letters to him (e.g., 6.16, 20; 7.33) to ensure that he got his due in his friend's forthcoming account of events? If they chose the Elder Pliny (deceased) over the Younger, they would be faced with a choice of Plinian publications from which Tacitus may have derived his information. Most likely the source was Pliny's history with the snappy title "Thirty-one books starting where Aufidius Bassus left off," as recorded in the nephew's list of his uncle's literary efforts (*Ep.* 3.5.6), a work that was intentionally published posthumously in order not to appear designed to flatter those in power (Plin., *Nat.* pref. 20). Unlike ancient grammarians or philosophers, who often indicate the title of the source from which they derive authority and may even provide a specific book number for longer publications, or modern scholars wishing to display their industry, Tacitus offers no reference to a written text that the curious may consult.

Indeed, the whole discussion resolves into a little joke. In a

scenario where we can imagine a perplexed interlocutor asking Tacitus as an authority on such matters to resolve the contradiction between two accounts, the historian has carefully weighed up the socially and politically charged alternatives. One apparently exculpates the new Flavian dynasty by putting the responsibility on an agent acting outside his terms of reference; the other blames a commander whose success had made him a political liability and who had been quickly retired to distant Spain. Finally, the guru answers, not so much tactfully dodging the question as using it to blacken the reputations of both candidates: each was perfectly capable of such a deed, when one considers their public reputations and actions (*Hist.* 3.28.1). The argument from likelihood based on character and circumstances, recreated by Mandy Rice Davies' utterance, "Well he would say that, wouldn't he?," is shown to be unreliable when there are multiple candidates for blame. In the case of the patricide during the battle, Tacitus came close to an ancient refutation of the defense of superior orders by spreading the blame throughout the infantry. When treating the culpability of the general command, Tacitus through a Latin version of "in this case, distinctions are not cost effective," indicates that they too are *all* to blame. At the same time, by deliberately raising the two possibilities and then erasing the difference, he inspires the listener to believe that he is truly in good hands, that he can trust the *auctoritas* and *fides* of a narrator who will let the blame fall where it may.

These two Latin words, *auctoritas* and *fides*, are vital for an understanding of Roman historiography, since they reflect the social structure of Roman society that is in turn embedded in its writings. They have left their mark on European languages, including English: for instance, *auctor* ultimately gives us the English term "author," while *fides* is reflected in "fidelity" and "faithfulness." The Latin reflects the power relationship between superior and inferior, often that of patron and client. To have *auctoritas* is to possess "clout" or "standing," to have the ability to make people do what you suggest or accept your words because you are in some way a better person than they. The emperor Augustus claimed that he was equal to other officers of state in his powers but surpassed them in *auctoritas* (*Res Gestae* 34.3). For *fides*, I would suggest the translation "reliability," since this suggests that the readers have put themselves at the mercy of the writer and the author is in turn bound by a duty not to deceive or cheat them. In modern discourse, "sincerity" fulfills a similar function. As (among others) Jean Giraudoux, Groucho Marx, and George Burns are all said to have remarked, "Once you can fake that, you've got it made."

The lesson that can be drawn from this example is not that Tacitus

is unconcerned about sources (these are treated elsewhere in this volume by David Potter) or about his duties to his audience. Contemporary listeners and readers did not expect that authorities would normally be named and they would usually be in no position to make comparisons in detail if they were. Where this audience differed from its modern counterparts, even if we imagine a collection of skilled professionals trained in Roman history and language, was in their intimate familiarity with the styles of material and methods of exposition through which the historian entertained and edified. There would be no point in Tacitean paradoxes, such as the above examples, if his public did not recognize and appreciate them. In brief, the Romans were better acquainted with the rules of historical depiction because of their greater exposure to historical texts, many of which are now lost to us. Some idea of this literature can be gained from the Flavian educationalist, Quintilian. After mentioning Sallust and Livy (substantial parts of whose works still exist), then Servilius Nonianus, Aufidius Bassus, and Cremutius Cordus (almost totally lost), he concludes that there are plenty of good Roman historians, but he will not name them all: he is only providing appetizers from the genre, not riffling through a library (*Inst.* 10.1.101–104).

Sophisticated listeners would thus have immediately recognized that “The beginning of my work will be when Servius [Sulpicius] Galba (for the second time) and Titus Vinius were consuls” (*Hist.* 1.1.1) introduced not only a historical work (why else offer a dating?), but one organized on a year-by-year pattern (since the change of consuls annually encouraged such a method). Tacitus may possibly have entitled his work *Historiae* (literally, “research”), a title (on which, see Goodyear 1972, 85–87) that ultimately derives from Herodotus’ “inquiries” (*istoriai*) and had, for instance, been used as the title of Sallust’s treatment of Roman history from 78 BCE on. Tacitus’ history was constructed out of annual accounts (*annales*), a Roman historical form that might claim its origin in the yearly records of the *pontifex maximus* kept from the beginning of the city. His *Histories* might thus be paradoxically retitled *Annales*, especially since the work we know as the *Annals*, his account of the Julio-Claudian emperors, was most probably entitled *From the Death of the Divine Augustus Onwards* (*Ab excessu diui Augusti*).

In the *Histories* Tacitus, immediately after naming his starting point, observes that although historiography has a long tradition at Rome the foundation of the principate had led to a style of writing verging on servility. This is a fault which he, writing in happier times, intends to correct. In the preface to the *Annals*, what had been the deeds of the Roman people (*res populi Romani*, *Hist.* 1.1.1) give way to the deeds of the Julio-Claudian emperors (*Tiberii Gaique et Claudii ac*

Neronis res, *Ann.* 1.1.2), hinting at an alternative system of chronology: that of using the regnal years of Rome's rulers. The change from *res publica* ("affairs that involve the populace as a whole") to *res aliena* ("foreign affairs," *Hist.* 1.1.1) was a natural consequence that marred successive accounts. In the *Annals*, the first dating, a point zero for the new imperial year, is set by the deeds of the emperor ("the first action of the new principate was the slaughter of Agrippa Postumus," *Ann.* 1.6.1). Only in the next chapter is a consular dating presented and then as subservient to imperial power: "At Rome consuls, senators, and *equites* rushed to slavery ... The consuls Sextus Pompeius and Sextus Appuleius [= the consular dating for 14 CE] were the first to swear the formula of allegiance to Tiberius Caesar" (*Ann.* 1.7.1, 2).

Generic features of the annalistic style, recognizable by Tacitus' audience, thus underline the tensions inherent in his historical writing between recording events concerning the Roman people as a whole and the biography of emperors. Judy Ginsburg (1981) by a careful examination of *Annals* 1–6 showed how the historian used and constantly varied the standard form. Understanding of the annalistic style has since been extended by John Rich (1997), who established that some of Tacitus' predecessors, such as Livy, tended to arrange their material by year and then divide it into separate sections for domestic (*domi*) and military/overseas (*militiae*) events, typically in the pattern of domestic/external/other domestic affairs. Others, such as Sallust, who claimed to be following an annalistic pattern in his *Histories*, actually were much freer in their structuring of their narratives. Tacitus thus had a large bag of tricks on which he could draw. For instance, in *Histories* 4, he begins the book with the aftermath of the Flavian capture of Rome and the death of Vitellius in December 69 (that is, he begins with a new regnal year, since Vitellius' death and obituary had drawn a line under events at the end of the previous book). Fighting is still going on in Rome in chapter 1; Vespasian's son Domitian, whose safe appearance from hiding filled the final lines of Book 3, takes over the imperial palace in chapter 2, while others assume real command. Only half-way through chapter 3 does the Senate assemble at Rome, electing Vespasian and his son Titus to the consulship for 70. While the chapter numbering provided for Tacitus' works can be discounted as a modern attempt to give them a paragraph-like structure, the actual sequence of the narrative is significant. Since events in Rome and the vicinity take up the first eleven chapters of *Histories* 4, the impression is given that a new year has begun and the historian is narrating civil business within the capital, a typical annalistic practice that separates campaigning, which would mainly occur later in the year and in foreign regions, from

domestic matters. In chapter 12 Tacitus then moves on to external affairs:

Around the same time the capital received increasing reports of a disaster in Germany, but no one was particularly saddened. They talked about their armies being slaughtered, the winter camps of the legions captured, and Gaul in revolt as if no great loss. I will set out the causes from which that war came about and how it flared up out of a great rebellion of foreign and allied tribes by going back into the past.

(*Hist.* 4.12.1)

There follows a digression on the origins and geographical location of the Batavi and the history of their chieftain, Julius Civilis, who had been arrested under Nero, sent home by Galba, and once more charged with plotting rebellion by the Roman troops on the Rhine after they declared Vitellius their new emperor. Tacitus' account of Civilis' revolt thus resembles a small monograph within his history, a *Bellum Batavianum*, with ethnographical and biographical digressions. He includes events prior to 69 and makes links back to material that he has already recounted, such as by announcing the arrival in Germany of the veteran Batavian cohorts. Two books earlier these had been sent back by Vitellius after his victory at Bedriacum to reinforce the Rhine frontier (*Hist.* 2.69.1). When Tacitus describes Civilis' siege of the Roman legions in their camp at Vetera and fighting between German raiders and the Treviri, he includes events from the winter of 69–70 that would have only occurred after the start of the following consular year. However, the official announcement of new office-holders is delayed until *Histories* 4.38, when Vespasian and Titus assume the consulship *in absentia*. The lack of their imperial presence adds to the fear and tension inside Rome, since public affairs have now definitely become foreign affairs due to the difficulties in communication with the eastern Mediterranean in winter. What emperor and son are doing is only revealed as late as 4.51 (Vespasian has entrusted the Jewish War to Titus while he himself is making preparations for his journey to Rome). Just as the news of Vitellius' death has taken time to reach the new emperor in the East, it is only now starting to circulate in Gaul and on the German frontier. Hence the resumption of the account of the revolt (4.54–79), ending with the establishment of a rough balance of fortune between Roman troops under Petilius Cerialis and an odd alliance of Gallic rebels, obdurate Vitellianists, Batavi, and German opportunists arrayed against them (4.79.4). Meanwhile, a long way from the Rhineland swamps, Vespasian is still waiting on favorable winds to be able to leave Egypt (4.81ff.).

In annalistic form, the anarchy of the times seems to be reflected in the very narrative structure of this section of the *Histories*. Tacitus' listener knows what to expect from the genre, but he is not receiving it and is probably somewhat confused as to what is going on in the Roman world. Of course, the great secret of the empire was finally made public in 69: "Emperors can be created in places other than Rome" (*Hist.* 1.4.2). Yet if there is no fixed point for Roman government, if senatorial debates in Rome such as occur in *Histories* 4 are mostly irrelevant, then history can no longer be structured around a single viewpoint. This would rightly create vertigo for those used to a Romano-centric outlook on the world.

Tacitus plays with the annalistic form in other ways as well. Originally the *pontifex maximus* recorded unusual local happenings for his annual record, as Cato the Elder complained:

I won't be satisfied with writing just what was on the *pontifex maximus*' tablet, such as high prices for grain (*annona cara*) or a shadow or some other phenomenon blocking the light of the sun or moon.

(*Cato, Orig.* 4.1 Chassignet = *Gel.* 2.28.6)

Such details could be boring if historians imitated this mode of registering events. But when Tacitus begins his account of the consular year 70 with "the people who were accustomed to buy their food on a day-to-day basis, whose sole concern in public affairs was for the price of grain (*cui una ex re publica annonae cura*), in their fear believed that the coast was blocked and shipping held in port" (*Hist.* 4.38.2), he is turning a traditional entry into a major cause of concern. When winter storms prevent normal shipments of food, people can literally lose their heads, as Lucius Piso, the governor of Africa, soon discovers (*Hist.* 4.50.2). Indeed, Tacitus does not record the cost of grain as simply dear but makes the point that prices can sometimes be as cruel as the emperor himself. Thus, in *Annals* 2.87 he talks of the bite (*saeuitia*) that corn prices take out of people's savings. In *Annals* 4.1.1 it is Tiberius who is acting like a savage beast (*saeuire*) or nurturing others who have been transformed into wild animals (*saeuientibus*). Late in his reign Tiberius gives the consuls and senators a thorough tongue-lashing when popular demonstrations in the theaters against the cost of food nearly lead to a domestic uprising (*Ann.* 6.13). By contrast, among the prodigies of 51 CE are listed not merely a shortage of food, but that as a consequence the emperor Claudius was nearly lynched by an enraged mob and had to be rescued once again by the military (*Ann.* 12.43.1). The difference between the two imperial styles is obvious. Celestial phenomena, in comparison with provisioning problems, are rarer, yet significant. An eclipse of the

moon is interpreted by the common soldiers in their ignorance of astronomy as portending their fate; Drusus, Tiberius' son, can then exploit this superstition to turn the tide of the Pannonian mutiny (*Ann.* 1.28). Later, a solar eclipse is but one of the many prodigies that appear in the wake of Nero's murder of his mother, Agrippina. As with the curious incident of the dog in the night-time as observed by Sherlock Holmes (it did not bark in the night), that nothing comes of all this ruckus is fully consonant with a world where matricide goes unpunished (*Ann.* 14.12.2). Modern readers may often be attracted to Tacitus because of his portrait of tyrannical emperors (so Momigliano 1961, 58), but as Syme highlighted in his brilliant study (1958a), there is much more than a world of heroes and villains in his history.

Just as modern cinema viewers can recognize a genre film (horror, "rom-com," film noir, and so forth) and may anticipate typical scenes and even dialogue from their familiarity with previous examples of the style, so Tacitus' listeners can be seen as thoroughly conversant with the elements that made up his historical writing. They achieved this proficiency from knowledge of earlier writers. Most prominent among these are the two singled out by Quintilian as the Roman Herodotus and Thucydides: Livy, the author of a 142-book history of Rome from its inception; and Sallust, known today for his monographs on the Roman war against the Numidian king Jugurtha and Catiline's conspiracy, but also the author of a five-book history of events from 78 to 67 now only surviving in fragments.

Livy is twice named in Tacitus' works. First, in *Agricola* 11.3, he is spoken of as "one of the finest literary stylists from earlier times" in the context of his comparison of the overall shape of Britain to an elongated rhombus (see Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, *ad loc.*). The second time is in *Annals* 4.34, when the Tiberian historian Cremutius Cordus has been put on trial for treason. One of the charges brought against Cremutius is that he had encouraged civil war by praising Brutus and calling Cassius "the last of the Romans." He in turn defends himself by noting that numerous historians had recorded the deeds of the Liberators and that they had all spoken respectfully of the two. He singles out Livy, who had an outstanding reputation for style (*eloquentia*) and reliability (*fides*) and never used current abusive political terms such as "bandit" or "parricide" for those who opposed the Caesarian party. Livy had even regularly referred to the defenders of the old republic as "outstanding individuals" (*Ann.* 4.34.3). Sallust is less prominent, named only once in Tacitus' works and then as the adoptive father of the Augustan and Tiberian courtier, Sallustius Crispus. Still the label attached to him in this context – "that most vigorous and reliable source for Roman history" (*Ann.* 3.30.2) – suggests not only his style, but an outspokenness that had been

smothered when the Julio-Claudian emperors were in the ascendancy (*Ann.* 1.1.2).

According to Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.32), appreciation of Sallust's brevity needed training and attention while Livy's rich and creamy style was less suitable if one wished to make a strong argument from a particular viewpoint. Tacitus, writing for an educated elite audience, might appear to be closer to Sallust than to Livy, especially if one accepts Quintilian's opinion that the latter is less capable of presenting a particular slant in his narrative. But as both authors were well known, they could each offer allusive parallels to Tacitus' subject matter. For instance, in *Annals* 3, the debate in the Senate over whether wives should accompany senatorial governors to their provinces (3.33–34) has numerous parallels with Cato's public speech on the repeal of the Oppian law restricting expenditure by women as reproduced in Livy (34.2–7). The Livian version is treated as so familiar to the senators that both Severus Caecina, who raises the question of restrictions, and Valerius Messalinus, a direct descendant of the Lucius Valerius who in Livy offers the counter-argument to Cato in favor of repealing the legislation, speaking for the retention of the status quo, explicitly refer to *leges Oppiae* – Oppian laws and similar restrictions (Martin and Woodman 1989, *ad Ann.* 3.32–35; Ginsburg 1993; Santoro L'Hoir 1994, 12–17). Here Tacitus' speakers engage in clear self-referentiality: since these proceedings resemble the famous Livian debate, the senators appear to be consciously recreating not Cato's original speech, which might never have been published (Astin 1978, 25–26), but Cato as imagined by Livy more than a century and a half later.

This is a striking use of allusion calling attention to itself. Other examples may be less signposted but still easily recognizable. Shortly after the above debate, the case of Clutorius Priscus who had prematurely recited an elegy for Tiberius' son, Drusus, was raised in the Senate and Haterius Agrippa, the consul designate, proposed the death penalty. In turn, the ex-consul Marcus Lepidus suggested that a better punishment, which would not preclude the emperor's later intervention, would be to confiscate Priscus' property and send him into exile. Only one other consular was prepared to side with Lepidus, so Priscus was led across to the state prison and immediately strangled (*Ann.* 3.50–51). The parallel in this case is with Sallust's account of the debate over the fate of the Catilinarian conspirators (*Cat.* 51–52), who also came to a bad end. In Sallust, however, Julius Caesar makes the unpopular case for keeping the conspirators alive after it has been proposed that they be executed, while Cato the Younger rallies the senators to maintain the hard line. In Tacitus, there is no Catonian speech, since almost all the senators wish to make a public display of

their loyalty to Caesar's successor, the emperor Tiberius. Lepidus' speech is not only the last, but indeed the only one recorded. Still, it is completely ineffectual in an atmosphere of fear. Tiberius, when informed of the Senate's actions, reacts ambiguously by praising the body's sense of loyalty (*pietas*) but criticizing their precipitate action. He compliments Lepidus for his good sense, but the consequent passing of a law creating a mandatory ten-day stay of sentence has no effect. The Tiberian Senate has no freedom to reconsider its decisions: this is a pointed Tacitean evocation through Sallust of the latter's model text, the Mytilenean debate in Thucydides 3.36–50 where, on the contrary, Diodotus' speech to the Athenian assembly in favor of mercy triumphs over Cleon's defense of the deterrent effect of brutality. And the emperor's attitude does not soften with the passage of time (Ginsburg 1986, 527–531; Woodman and Martin 1996, *ad Ann.* 3.48–51).

These scenes show Tacitus operating on the basis of his audience's recognizing allusions, both in narrative construction and actual textual quotations. Other Tacitean references to his predecessors may be less obvious because the historian chooses not to highlight them. For instance, Tony Woodman, in his description of the mutinies that followed Augustus' death in 14 CE (*Ann.* 1.16–49), has shown that Tacitus must be seen as drawing on Livy's depiction of how Scipio handled rebellious troops in Spain in 206 BCE (28.24–29) (Manolaraki 2003, 21–36; Woodman 2006, 312–317; Syme 1958a, 685–686, had already shown that Tacitus recalls this Livian passage on several occasions, particularly in *Hist.* 4.58). Another set of Livian parallels does not seem to have been previously recognized. *Annals* 15.6–17 offers an account of the arrival of Caesennius Paetus in Cappadocia in 62 CE to take control of Roman forces in Armenia from the governor of Syria, Domitius Corbulo. Paetus, who unwisely undertook a military campaign in his new province, was forced back into camp and besieged by the Parthian king, Vologaeses. Although Corbulo was leading troops to his rescue, Paetus agreed to terms with the Parthians that required complete Roman withdrawal from Armenia. The result was a humiliation of Roman power, even if a victory arch at Rome, voted by the Senate before the news of the outcome of the war, was nevertheless erected, a triumph of appearances over facts (*adspectui consulitur spreta conscientia*, *Ann.* 15.18.1).

Rhiannon Ash has shown that Tacitus' depiction of Corbulo's campaigns in the East recalls the more successful activities of Lucullus in the same area, a hundred years previously, possibly following the lead of Corbulo's own memoirs (Ash 2006). At the same time, Paetus' invasion of Armenia and defeat has a strong Livian flavor. When attacked by the Parthian king, the besieged Roman troops avoid

venturing out of their fortified camp to offer battle. The black comedy is noticeable. Tacitus offers a choice of three explanations for this behavior: it may have been in response to orders not to risk an engagement, it may have been an act of cowardice, or it may have been in sensible expectation of Corbulo coming to their relief. The historian then considers the psychology of the legionaries, whom he depicts as recalling tales of Rome's republican past: not of soldiers fighting to the last man, but of the capitulation to the Samnites at the Caudine Forks (narrated in Livy 9) or to the Spaniards at Numantia in 137 BCE (from the now lost Livy 55). Since the men of the Roman army in their much-praised glory days of the republic looked out for themselves, the anonymous speaker suggests, it makes even better sense when faced by the might of Parthia (*Ann.* 15.13.2). Yet while the Roman soldiers cite Livy to support their defeatism, the Parthians can play the Roman game with more success. Thus Vologaeses is portrayed as taking things slowly by nature (*cunctator ingenio*, 15.1.1), a characterization that recalls Livy's description of Fabius Maximus' conduct during the Hannibalic War. As it turns out, all good things do come to those who wait, since Paetus is forced by his men to agree to evacuate Armenia. A rumor even circulates that the Roman army had suffered the ignominy of passing under the yoke.

The parallels with Livy's description of Rome's humiliating defeat by the Samnites at Caudium are well known (Woodman 1992, 184; see Ash 1998 for striking parallels with other Roman surrenders at Cremona in 69 CE and during the Batavian war). However, I would suggest that in his narrative scheme, Tacitus also uses the well-known story of the conflict between Fabius as dictator and his *magister equitum* Minucius during the crisis of the Second Punic War to highlight the problems between Corbulo and Paetus and contrast imperial Rome with its republican past.

In Livy 22.27–30, events are set out thus:

27. After criticism of Fabius' caution and reports of the success of his *magister equitum*, the Roman assembly has extraordinarily voted that Minucius should have equal authority to the dictator. As Fabius is unwilling to follow the command of Minucius, the two generals divide their forces and set up camp separately.

28. Hannibal lays a trap for Minucius, and by gradually drawing in more troops to a skirmish, he succeeds in luring him into a full-scale battle on unfavorable ground.

29.1–6 Fabius, regarding saving his fellow Romans as more important than assuaging his personal humiliation, comes to the rescue with his army and Hannibal retreats.

29.7–11 Minucius declares to his men that, since his strategy has been shown to be deficient, he will take the alternative course of obeying someone who knows the right course.

30. Minucius and his army enter the dictator's camp. Minucius addresses Fabius as an obedient son would his parent, while his soldiers embrace the dictator's troops like clients thanking their patrons. Traditional patterns of hierarchy are reestablished, and Fabius is praised to heaven in Rome as well. Hannibal and his men now realize they have a real war on their hands.

Compare Tacitus, *Annals* 15.6–17:

6. Corbulo is criticized for leaving Armenia, since Vologaeses is marking his time in order to do battle with some other general. Paetus arrives and the generals divide their forces. Paetus belittles Corbulo's previous efforts as bereft of real slaughter and plunder and boasts that he will impose full Roman rule on Armenia.

7–8. Paetus enters Armenia amid bad omens, wastes the fruits of his successes over the summer by needless marches, and sends messages to Nero that he has won the war.

9. Corbulo shows foresight in preparing the defenses of Syria, so the Parthians decide to concentrate their attack on Paetus.

10. Against military advice, Paetus leaves his winter camp with insufficient troops and is driven back. He reluctantly seeks help from Corbulo, who is in no hurry to assist until matters reach a crisis.

11. When Vologaeses routs Paetus' first line of defense, the Roman commander desperately sends messages begging Corbulo to save him and his army.

12. Corbulo starts out with a well-prepared expeditionary force and encourages his men with the prospect of gaining fame not for saving individuals, but a whole army.

13–15. Vologaeses tightens his siege. While Paetus proclaims that the Romans have full rights over Armenia and recalls the campaigns of Lucullus and Pompey, Vologaeses insists that the Romans withdraw completely before negotiations begin. The Roman army leaves camp like a defeated force, abandoning arms and equipment and even their wounded to the enemy.

16. Paetus and his men flee in disarray. Corbulo's rescue force, which was only three days' march from relieving the besieged, on recognizing their comrades' pitiful state, greets them with tearful

embraces.

17. There is a brief exchange between the two generals. While Paetus wants the two now to invade Armenia jointly, Corbulo chooses to lead his weary men back to safeguard Syria.

The similarities of the two accounts cannot be accidental. Roman forces are portrayed as ineffectual when divided among two commanders, especially as one is a blowhard with no military skill. The senior commander is forced to come to his junior's rescue, leading to a climactic reunion of the two forces with strong emotional undertones. Tension is added to this remodeling of a familiar story by verbal echoes of Livy's description of the aftermath of the Roman defeat at Caudium that, along with the explicit mention of the Caudine Forks by the Roman soldiers, suggest that Tacitus is drawing the reader's attention to his intertexts. Can the rescue force arrive before disaster occurs? Yet equally striking is the difference between idealized republican commanders and those of the imperial period. Fabius was notably unwilling to allow Minucius' army to suffer through the errors of populist Roman politicians and their commander's stupidity. This portrait of Fabius the ideal patriot, unconcerned for his own reputation in a society that placed such emphasis on spectacular military success, had been revived in the Domitianic period by the consular poet, Silius Italicus, in Book 7 of his *Punica*. Indeed, it is quite likely that, given Tacitus' interests, he was aware of Silius' work – certainly his literary associate Pliny the Younger had attended a Silian literary soirée on at least one occasion (*Ep.* 3.7.4; on Silius and Tacitus, see Manolaraki and Augoustakis in this volume). Corbulo, for all his claims to possess old-fashioned virtue, is no Stoic republican, but, it is suggested, he is rather pleased with others' discomfiture. His men may show pity for their comrades' plight and avoid rubbing their noses in their disgraceful defeat, but Corbulo has no time at all for Paetus. Paetus in turn is incapable of learning from his misfortunes, since he now suggests doubling the stakes by a joint attack on Armenia, leaving Syria exposed to Parthian invasion. Since Corbulo did not in fact rescue the governor of Armenia, the result is a failed *exemplum* – that is, while one may treat Fabius' actions as a model for others to emulate, there is no such precedent that may be drawn from Corbulo's efforts. The message seems to be that, in the imperial system, generals, no longer responsible to the Roman state as a whole, simply aim at gaining the approval of an emperor who is far removed from affairs taking place on the borders of the empire. Corbulo thus receives from Nero an extraordinary command in the East that is compared to the power bestowed by the Roman people on Pompey to deal with the pirates, while Paetus is recalled in shame (*Ann.* 15.24.2–4).

Tacitus similarly alludes to earlier historiography in his portrait of the great villain of Tiberius' reign, Sejanus:

He was born at Vulsinii, the son of Seius Strabo, a Roman *eques*. In his early manhood, he was part of the retinue of Gaius Caesar, the grandson of Augustus – although there was also a rumor that he had prostituted himself to the wealthy spendthrift Apicius. Soon after he put Tiberius under obligation by his range of abilities, so much so that he made a man who was unfathomable to others relax his guard with him alone. This was not so much the result of his cunning (because he in turn was defeated by the same methods) as from divine anger against the Roman state, to which he brought equal destruction whether he prospered or fell. He had a physique that could endure hard work and a spirit that was ready to take risks. He covered his own tracks while spreading tales about others. Flattery and arrogance existed side by side within him. In public, he was cloaked in decency, but underneath was a burning desire to obtain total control. To achieve this he showed not only extravagant generosity, but also watchful diligence, a quality no less harmful whenever it is feigned in order to achieve tyranny.

(*Ann.* 4.1.2–3)

The first part of this study analyzes Sejanus' rise from humble municipal origins to becoming the confidante of the emperor, suggesting that he in early days was willing to sell his body to advance his career. This political slur was borrowed from Athenian politics (for instance, from Aeschines' attack on Timarchus) to be used in the invective of the late Roman republic, as when Cicero in the *Second Philippic* suggested that Mark Antony had been Curio's mistress. The final step in Sejanus' unofficial *cursus honorum* – after all, as a mere *eques* and not a senator, he never holds a traditional position of power – is to become Tiberius' "partner in labors" (*socius laborum*, *Ann.* 2.2.3), after which he becomes an instrument of divine vengeance on all Rome. Where in a eulogy there should next be a description of the individual's virtues, we find instead a character sketch that recalls late republican politics and Cicero's vendetta against Catiline, through the characterization of the latter in Sallust's *Catiline* (5.3–6). The corruption of positive values in the service of gaining absolute power that can be seen in Sejanus and Catiline has been carefully analyzed by Martin and Woodman in their commentary on *Annals* 3.1.3. There is another intertext that is worth considering, Livy's depiction of Hannibal (21.4.5–10). Hannibal is described as possessing the same mixture of boldness and intelligence as Catiline and Sejanus ("he never lacked in boldness in involving himself in

dangers or in foresight when in their midst; no toil could exhaust his body or overcome his spirit,” 21.4.5). Equally tolerant of heat and cold, he wins the approval of both his commanding officer and his subordinates. Hannibal also has enormous faults that match his virtues: “inhuman cruelty, treachery beyond Carthaginian measure, a lack of regard for the truth, a lack of regard for the sacred, no concern for the gods, no concern for oaths, no scruples whatsoever” (21.4.10).

The military aspects of Sallust’s portrait of Catiline are explicable in that Catiline had served under Sulla and is depicted as appealing in his conspiracy, among others, to the Sullan veteran farmers in Etruria. He becomes the model of the soldier outside the law, unrestrained by normal Roman values and prepared to do whatever is necessary to achieve absolute power (*regnum*). Hannibal, of course, was Rome’s foe *par excellence* and the prime example of barbarian rejection of civilized values. When Tacitus looked back at Sallust’s sketch of Catiline, he would also have been aware of its reproduction in Livy, and by alluding to the first, he brings out features of the second. Sejanus is not merely a revolutionary, but an enemy of Rome itself, whose treachery in seducing Livilla and poisoning Drusus are but steps in his campaign to conquer the capital. Of course Sejanus was, like those to whom he is compared, a military officer, the commander of the Praetorian Guard. The comparison with Hannibal (who, incidentally, Livy 21.3.4 suggests may have provided sexual services to his superior, as Sejanus is reputed to have done with Apicius) transforms him into an instrument of divine testing of the Roman state.

The members of Roman society modeled their behavior on their predecessors and would advertise their allegiance to the *mores maiorum*. Typically, a decline from earlier days is observed, as by Sallust in his introduction to the *Catiline* or by Livy in his Preface. Tacitus seems to follow the same trend when he compares the subject matter of republican history (great wars and major policy debates at home) with his own limited material (*Ann.* 4.32–33). But tracing the development of major themes (“to look deeply into things that are at first sight of little significance from which an upheaval in major affairs often arises,” 4.32.2) is in fact the real work of a historian. Thus, not only do historical periods appear to contend with one another for the reader’s interest, but Tacitus, in writing about the times he has chosen, is also in competition with his predecessors. For instance, not everything at Rome steadily declined, as he observes in *Annals* 3.55: domestic extravagance decreased under the Julio-Claudians, partly because attempting to rival the imperial household was found to be unwise, partly because the influx of new senators brought their domestic frugality with them. “Long may this contest in decency (*ex*

honesto = *ek tou kalou*) between us and our ancestors continue” (3.55.5).

This friendly rivalry with the past is given added piquancy by the way it recalls Sallust’s description at the beginning of the *Catiline* of the competition between brawn and brain (1.5f.): Tacitus is happy for generations to vie with one another in terms of virtues, but not in other terms, such as in possessions. He also appears to have specifically named Sallust from the throng of earlier sources as his authority for avoiding giving a specific number of the dead in the Dacian campaigns during Domitian’s reign. The contrast seems to have been between defeats in republican times that were better not mentioned and the triumph that the emperor Domitian celebrated “over the annihilated legions under the excuse of having conquered the enemy” (*Hist.* fr. 6 Heubner = Orosius 7.10.4). Tacitus returns to the theme once again in *Annals* 16.16:

Indeed, if I were recording foreign wars and deaths suffered for the good of the state with such similarity in events, it would have been too much for me. I would expect others to find this insufferable too and be unable to put up with the constant description of the sad ends of their fellow citizens, however noble they may be. In this case, a willingness to suffer like slaves and the amount of blood shed within the state will exhaust our spirits and paralyze them with grief. I will not require those who will hear about them to accept any other plea in my defense than that I cannot hate them for dying so slowly. That was the anger of the gods against the Roman state and, unlike with military disasters or the capture of cities, one may not simply state what occurred and pass on by. Let this much be provided for the future memory of outstanding heroes: just as their funerals separate them from common burials, so by the narration of their last hours they should obtain and preserve an individual history.

(*Ann.* 16.16)

The passage is striking in its contrast between the full-scale narratives of major foreign wars, such as filled the pages of Livy, and the individual deaths of Nero’s victims. These cannot be simply recorded in annalistic style but are to be given individual monuments. Tacitus is thus drawing on a metaphor common enough in early historians, that of striking depictions of major events (for instance, Livy pref. 10 speaks of offering in his work “displays of every type of precedent that can be viewed as if set up on a famous monument”), but turns his exemplars from sculpted friezes into the very funeral monument that distinguishes the dead. Here, he is moving from state history, the *res gestae* of the Roman people, to incorporating into his

narrative personalized *exitus* literature, the record of the last hours and last words of the victims of tyranny. This recovers an aristocratic record of events, distinguishing the great from the masses as funeral orations for those of great families had done in the republic. Yet the irony is that this family pride (*posteritas* requires descendants, *posterī*) is only achieved through a violent display of the power of the emperor, interpreted as a sign of divine punishment.

The problem with accounts of the deaths of famous people under the likes of Nero and Domitian (on which see Marx 1937) was that these would be particularly attractive to the friends and relatives of the dead who would clearly want to see the deceased given prominence in a sanitized account of events. Fabius Rusticus certainly liked to paint a rosy picture of his patron Seneca (*Ann.* 13.20.2; cf. 14.2, 15.61 for other historical interventions), but the glorification of particular individuals could also be taken as an attack on the failures of others, and descendants of those who played less honorable roles might still be alive (*Ann.* 4.33.4). It is likely that Tacitus would have preferred to create his own version of events, and one way he could do this is by the time-honored practice of inserting death notices (Pomeroy 1991). Seneca the Elder (*Suas.* 6.21) suggests that Livy had popularized the form, and an examination of his treatment of the evaluation of the dead suggests that this may be true. Asinius Pollio, a loyal supporter of Julius Caesar and, hence, his successor Antony, had given a rather jaundiced appreciation of Cicero in his account of the civil wars:

Regarding this man, since he has left behind so many and such great works that will last for all the ages, it is superfluous to pronounce on his intellect and industry. Besides Nature and Fortune both attended on him, given that he maintained a handsome appearance and good health through to old age. In addition, he was lucky to live in a long period of peace and was equipped with the skills for it: when the courts were restored to their ancient severity, an enormous crowd of criminals appeared, whom he bound to himself by representation and mainly kept untouched by the law ... If only he could have acted with more restraint in success or with more fortitude in adversity ... But since absolute virtue is granted to no mortal, we must judge a man on the greater part of his life and intellect. And I myself would not even think that his death deserved to be pitied, if he had not thought death so pitiable.

(*Sen., Suas.* 6.24)

Livy's response requires full attention from the reader:

He had lived for sixty-three years. Hence, if violence had not

been present, his death could not have appeared premature. He flourished intellectually through his works and the rewards they brought. He himself long enjoyed good fortune, but within this long run of success he was from time to time struck by bitter blows: exile, the ruin of the political group for which he had taken a stand, the death of his daughter, a truly sad and bitter end. Of all these adversities he endured none of them like a man, except for his death – and if you were to consider that fairly, it could be seen as less undeserved, given that he suffered nothing worse from his victorious enemy than he would have inflicted on him in defeat if he had the same luck. Still, if one weighs his faults against his virtues, he was a great and memorable man – to sing his praises one would need a Cicero as eulogist.

(fr. 60 *Jal* = *Sen.*, *Suas.* 6.22)

Livy does not deny Cicero's faults, but he does tone down Pollio's complaints. No mention is made of the orator's dubious clients in the closing days of the republic, but Cicero's unusually good fortune for a new man is acknowledged. In particular, his death is not merely the result of underestimating the opposition (so Pollio), but the result of a principled stand, one of the two possible outcomes of his duel with Antony. While the Antonian Pollio combats the public sympathy that Cicero's murder had elicited by suggesting that the civilian had not died like a true soldier should, Livy suggests that both Antony and Cicero should shoulder some blame. Pollio uses the traditional topos of judging by the greater part of a life to suggest reluctant acceptance of Cicero's brilliance, but for Livy the glass is half full. The orator was a great man, so great that only he could sing his own praises. It is difficult not to think that Livy has considered his predecessor's final *sententia* and, with a feeling of inner pride, topped it with his own witticism.

Tacitus is clearly writing in this tradition. One immediately thinks of Galba, a man labeled as “a contender to be ruler, if only he had not won the crown” (*capax imperii, nisi imperasset*, *Hist.* 1.49.4). If Plutarch reflects an earlier historian to whom Tacitus had access with the summary “Galba left no one longing for his reign, but most pitying his death” (*Galba* 29), then Tacitus' rewrite is clear. Starting from an alternate history (“if he had not ruled”) he changes the conclusion from Pollian emotion (“he would not have been pitied”) to Livian judgmentalism (“he would have been admired”), encapsulated in the permanent branding as *capax imperii*.

Other obituaries also show Tacitus playing with the form. For instance in *Histories* 3.62, he sums up the career of Fabius Valens, the recently executed Vitellian general:

Valens was born at Anagnia into an equestrian family. Since he was lax in his morals but quick of wit, he looked to obtain a reputation for sophistication through outrageousness. He played pantomime roles during Nero's Youth Games as though under compulsion, but soon of his own accord. He did this rather cleverly, if not respectably. As legionary commander, he both supported Verginius and bad-mouthed him. He had Fonteius Capito killed for disloyalty – or because he could not change his loyalty. While he betrayed Galba, he was loyal to Vitellius and stood out amid the treachery of the rest.

(*Hist.* 3.62.2)

Valens has a similar country-boy background to Sejanus, but, unlike the praetorian prefect who rose in power through traditional patronage, Valens exploits the opportunities for bypassing upper-class behavior patterns offered under Nero. Appearing on stage was forbidden for high-status Romans but, notoriously, the emperor ignored this provision. Valens' lack of indoctrination in traditional Roman values in conjunction with a sharp intelligence accounts for the dangerous egotism of his actions. Hence a truncated *cursus honorum* (offices held in the service of the state, here restricted to an indirect record of his career as legate of the Rhine legions) is subordinated to the description of the subject's *ethos*, his major traits. What appears at first sight to be a death notice built around unconnected paradoxes is in fact consistent with Valens' characterization, even his perverse and fatal loyalty to Vitellius.

The descriptions of campaigns and battles, frequent in the *Agricola* and the *Histories* and more common in the *Annals* than Tacitus would lead us to believe (cf. *Ann.* 4.32), could also profitably be investigated for their relationship to earlier historians. In *Histories* 4.30, the doomed Roman forces at Vetera defend themselves with an engine that looms over the besiegers, from time to time diving to grab a victim and toss him inside the fortifications. This account is remarkably similar to the one that Livy (24.34.10) offers of the siege machine that Archimedes used to lift up and drop Roman ships straying too close to the walls of Syracuse. The Roman campaigns against Tacfarinas in North Africa in the reign of Tiberius, as might perhaps be expected, are described in ways that show considerable reminiscences with Sallust's *Jugurtha*. Perhaps more noteworthy is the death of the African prince: "When his bodyguard was cut down all around him, his son captured, and the Romans were pouring in around him, he threw himself on their weapons and escaped captivity, taking many of the enemy with him as he died" (*Ann.* 4.25.3). The model for this good death is in fact Catiline who, "when he saw that his troops had been defeated and he was left with only a few men,

remembering his family honor and his previous rank, rushed into the thick of the enemy and died there fighting” (Sal., *Cat.* 60.7). In this same battle account, Tacitus talks of the Africans taken by surprise: “They had no weapons, no battle order, no strategy; but, like sheep, they were dragged out, slaughtered, [or] captured” (*Ann.* 4.25.2). The double tricolon reminds the reader that this is war narrative, imitating the style of military reports familiar from Caesar’s *commentarii* and his slogan from his Pontic triumph “I came, I saw, I conquered” (Suet., *Iul.* 37.2).

In brief, Tacitus and his audience were familiar with Roman historical writing and its various sub-genres and topoi – Greek too, though I have not touched on this topic here. The production of literature at Rome was a competitive business and those whose efforts did not reach the highest standards would be forgotten (cf. Q. Haterius, *Ann.* 4.61). Those who succeeded were rewarded with literary immortality, not merely read but acting as exemplars for others to measure themselves against. While as readers of Tacitus in the twenty-first century we cannot fully experience the thrill his first listeners experienced, still we can appreciate his skill in inserting himself into the historiographical tradition. With familiarity with the style and method come flashes of recognition and appreciative pleasure from how well the historian plays his hand. As the greatest Roman historian of the twentieth century and colossus of Tacitean studies stated, as a Roman might, “There is work to be done” (Syme 1968, 145).

NOTE

1. Translations are the author’s unless otherwise indicated.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The standard German commentaries on Tacitus, Koestermann (1963–1968) and Heubner (1963–1982), note many parallels between Tacitus and earlier Roman writers, especially Sallust and Livy; the same is true of the excellent recent English commentaries by Rives (1999), Damon (2003), Ash (2007), Goodyear (1972, 1981), Woodman and Martin (1996), Martin and Woodman (1989), and Martin (2001). For Livian “coloring” (a term that suggests that borrowings may not be conscious allusions), see Oakley’s commentary on Livy VI–X, esp. on 9.5.11. As yet, no one has attempted a full study

that would review Tacitus in the Roman historiographical tradition in detail (that would be a very complex task). However, Marincola (1997) sets out clearly the competitive relationship between the major ancient historians and their predecessors, particularly as seen in their programmatic statements in their prefaces. For a brief survey of Roman historiography before Tacitus, see Gowing (2009). Sinclair (1995, 122–132) gives a good account of the cut and thrust of oratory under the empire.

For Tacitus' use of annalistic history, Ginsburg (1981) is still fundamental; Rich (1997) expands this study to encompass all the Roman annalists. Some of the more interesting recent studies of Tacitus and his intertexts are Ginsburg (1986, 1993), Keitel (1992), Ash (1998, 2006), and Woodman (2006). On Tacitus' obituaries see Syme (1958b), Gill (1983), Woodman (1989), and Pomeroy (1991).

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The Concentration of Power and Writing History

Forms of Historical Persuasion in the Histories (1.1– 49)

Olivier Devillers

1. First Unit of the *Histories*: Methodological Issues, the Emergence of a Theme (1.1–11)

Chapters 1.1–11 are the first unit of the *Histories*, defined in a literary way as beginning at 1.1.1: “I will begin my work with the second consulship of Servius Galba, whose colleague was Titus Vinius” (*initium mihi operis Seruius Galba iterum, Titius Vinius consules erunt*), and 1.11.3: “such was the situation of the Roman empire when the consuls Servius Galba, for the second time, and Titus Vinius ... ” (*hic fuit rerum Romanarum status, cum Seruius Galba iterum, Titius Vinius consules ...* ; see, e.g., Wille 1983, 224; Cole 1992, 243; Geiser 2007, 173).

From the very opening Tacitus emphasizes two difficulties he faces as a historian of the principate: one is the difficulty of access to information monopolized by the *princeps* (*inscitia rei publicae ut alienae*, “ignorance of affairs of state as though it were someone else’s possession,” 1.1.1; Sailor 2008, 125–126), while the other is the management of a personal relationship with the emperor, which oscillates between adulation and hatred (*libidine adsentandi aut rursus odio aduersus dominantes*, “the spirit of adulation or on the contrary

hatred of those in power,” 1.1.1). If the second problem is eliminated by commitment to be impartial (1.1.3; Sailor 2008, 150–153), the first is not resolved within the initial chapter.

The next ten chapters do seem to be not unaware of the issue. Tacitus first offers an overview of matters he will treat (1.2–3) and presents his work as “rich in occurrences” (*opimum casibus*, 1.2.1, a correction – but also the *lectio* of Manuscript L – for *opibus casibus*). Yet at 1.1.4, he refers to the possible history of Trajan and Nerva as *uberiorem materiam*, “more fruitful matter,” than what he is about to discuss. Thus, though rich in events (and acts of virtue, even, 1.3.1), his *Histories* would lack the *ubertas* (“fruitfulness”) that would characterize a chronicle of the first Antonines. Should we not conclude that the *ubertas* of a literary work (cf. *uberem ad dicendum materiam*, “fertile matter for speeches,” *Dial.* 37.6) derives neither from the quantity nor from the variety of information mentioned? It would depend more on the ability to produce trustworthy information for these events, in spite of difficulties following the foundation of the principate (e.g., Raaflaub 2008, 270).

Chapters 1.4–11 appear to demonstrate how the historian intends to do so. He provides an overview of the empire “in order to make known not only the occurrences and outcomes of events, which are all too often fortuitous, but also their rational links and their causes” (*ut non modo casus euentusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causaeque noscantur*, 1.4.1). In short, he wishes to go beyond the simple *casus* (cf. *opimum casibus*, 1.2.1) to achieve a more profound knowledge, embracing the search for causes (thus *nunc initia causasque motus Vitelliani expediam*, “I will now expose the origin and the causes of the uprising of Vitellius,” 1.51.1). He thus offers his historian’s subjectivity as a remedy for the lack of traditional channels of information, which he considers obstructed. In this respect it is significant that the first of his psychological extrapolations precisely echoes the unveiling of an imperial secret: “a secret of the regime that had become notorious” (*euolgato imperii arcano*, 1.4.2). One is reminded of the plan of chapters 1.14–17: developing his account of the meeting during which Galba adopted Piso, which included a version of the words spoken by the emperor, Tacitus begs to differ from the common mob of Romans, packed before the palace “impatient to find out about the great secret” (*magni secreti impatiens*, 1.17.2).

Furthermore, in chapters 1.4–11, the historian wonders about the mindset of the various actors on the political stage. Their focus on Galba reflects their acceptance of a regime that makes the *princeps* pivotal in political life. The senators themselves cannot escape this, since their very attitude is determined by him: “as they had to deal

with an absent prince” (*ut erga principem nouum et absentem*, 1.4.3). This feature appears again in other passages in which Otho (1.85) or Vitellius (1.50) are, in their turn, central concerns. Similarly, rumors are mentioned relating to, for the most part, the *princeps* or his succession: “no other topic, for sure, had been more often debated in the entire city in the course of the past months” (*non sane crebrior tota ciuitate sermo per illos menses*, 1.12.2). At the same time these rumors (on this type of information in Tacitus, see especially Giua 1998) are symptomatic of a crisis of knowledge resulting from the nature of the regime: true knowledge is the prerogative of the *princeps*, while others must make do with reports that are more or less reliable.

Also noticeable at the end of the section is an observation on the status of Egypt as established by Augustus (1.11). As often when he evokes Augustus (Devillers 2009), Tacitus shows how he claimed for himself a jurisdiction derived from the collective. Likewise, at the time of Piso’s adoption, Galba, while falling in line with the foundation of the principate, reproaches him for intending to hand over his power only within his own house (1.15.2; more extensively 16.1 on the dynastic system in place under the Julio-Claudians). Toward the end of the book, the constitutional action of Augustus is again discussed, still along the same lines: he had acted so that “the Roman people would fight from afar in response to his mere worries or simply for his glory” (*procul et in unius sollicitudinem aut decus populus Romanus bellauerat*, 1.89.2).

Finally, Tacitus foreshadows the fate of Galba and T. Vinius – “a year that, for them, was their last, which for the republic was almost lethal” (*annum sibi ultimum, rei publicae prope supremum*, 1.11.3) – illustrating, through this formulation, a regime where individual destinies are practically identical with the course of the state (cf. the alternation *sibi/rei publicae*).

Hence, just as much as chapters 1.1–11 are a summary of the political situation on the brink of the year 69, so they seem like a historiographical reflection, conditioned by a political statement: the concentration of power in the hands of one person. This statement itself recurs within the narrative, in the form of a theme, no longer explaining the historiographical approach of Tacitus but the attitudes of the players in history. This is the theme that will occupy us as we attempt to show how it fits with the “art of historical persuasion” deployed by Tacitus in *Histories* 1. The expression refers to the “art of historical distortion” (*déformation historique*), a phrase established by the works of Rambaud (e.g., 1966) on the *Commentaries* of Caesar. At times misunderstood, this somehow assumes the narrator to have a kind of factual knowledge that does not match Tacitus’ situation, which justifies, precisely, his own historical method by his “ignorance

of the affairs of state.” Consequently, the impartiality that he claims cannot be measured against the aura of respect – or non-respect – toward a reality that is in part inaccessible to him; his historical *fides* much rather depends on the modes of subjective investigation that he adopts to establish his version of the facts. More, perhaps, than the truthfulness of any particular episode, he needs to convince the reader of the quality of his discourse on the past. The telling itself becomes both a means and an object of persuasion.

We shall first offer an overview of chapters 1.12–49, thought of as a paradigm for the entire account of events in the year 69 (Keitel 2006, 244), and we shall highlight, for each narrative section, the chief manifestations of the theme, namely, the concentration of power in the hands of the *princeps*, as well as the attendant difficulties of knowledge. Then, in relation to this theme, we shall examine a few methods that can guide the reader’s judgment, especially those that connect different parts of the text (“method of thematic unity,” Devillers 1994, 97–184). We will swiftly point out those that come from an elaboration of sources or of style. Finally, keeping the same perspective, we shall look at certain types of passages that are traditional in ancient historiography. For these last two parts, our reading will be drawn from 1.1–49, occasionally expanded, where appropriate, by further examples drawn from other parts of *Histories* 1.

2. The Concentration of Power in the Main Narrative Sections (1.12–49)

1.12–20: Galba’s Efforts to Stabilize the Empire

The soldiers of Germany demand a new emperor, while leaving the Senate and the Roman people free to choose who it shall be “in order that their uprising be more indulgently greeted” (*quo seditio mollius acciperetur*, 1.12.1; also 55.4, 56.2, 57.1). This attribution of thought reveals a shift in a development in Roman political rhetoric; the purpose is not to practice public speaking but political arguments: the good of the state, in the minds of some at least, has become the cloak for the pursuit of personal power. Yet Galba is at odds with this mentality. Wondering why Galba adopts Piso rather than Otho, Tacitus writes: “I believe Galba also worried about the affairs of the state, useless to take from Nero, only to leave with Otho” (*credo et rei publicae curam subisse, frustra a Nerone translatae, si apud Othonem*

relinqueretur, 1.13.2). This sentence formulates one major aspect of Tacitean political thought, amply illustrated in the *Annals*: the good of the collective depends on the individual quality of the emperor in place. Narratively, however, this idea that evokes the good of the state as the motive of Galba's political action sets Galba apart not only from the majority of Romans, who have lost the love of their country (*paucis ... rei publicae amor*, "few ... had love for the state," 1.12.3), but also from a good number of senators (*priuatas spes agitantes sine publica cura*, "nurturing personal hopes without care for public good," 1.19.1). This divergence, suggested as early as 1.5.2: "an honorable utterance in the interest of the state, but dangerous to himself" (*uox pro re publica honesta, ipsi anceps*; see Keitel 2006, 227), recurs at the point when, in his speech, he refers to the "love of country" (*amor patriae*, 1.15.1) and deplores the pursuit of personal interest like a disease (1.15.4). He even provides an explanation for his repeated failures, marking the end of the section (Geiser 2007, 210–211): his speech to the soldiers does not meet with enthusiasm (1.18.3), the man he chooses survives only a few days into his adoption (1.19.1), and the dispatching of an embassy to the German armies occurs in the midst of confusion (1.19.1–2; also 74.2). This pattern of failure, which spans all of chapters 1.12–20 (Morgan 1993b), returns at 1.20, which features two bits of information that doubtlessly date from 68, but whose mention might have been postponed (Damon 2003, 145–146; Galtier 2003, 39). On the one hand, attempting to recover some of the bounties showered by Nero, the emperor sets out to remedy damage suffered by the state due to imperial *liberalitas*; the weighty measures he decides for (also 1.90.1) show the difficulty in countering this "personalization" of power. On the other hand, the dismissal of several officers has the effect of instilling fear and suspicion among the high ranks of the army. This inefficiency of Galba's is recalled in the narrative: he does not take the rumors about Otho's *coup d'état* seriously (1.26.2); the historian reports the failure of those soldiers sent to thwart it (1.31.2–3) and the divergence of opinions evoked when the emperor leaves the Palatine (1.32.2–33; also when he approaches the forum, 1.39.1).

1.21–28: Otho's Maneuvers to Seize the Empire

Chapters 1.21–28 reveal in Otho a state of mind entirely different from Galba's (Geiser 2007, 211–221). From 1.21 Tacitus lends him a long train of thought – and this is the only source we have on this – a kind of "inner monologue" (Utard 2002, 62), where, as opposed to Galba, his only concern is for his personal destiny. Then follows the story of the origin and development of his imperial ambitions (1.22–

24), with an emphasis on personal ties he had made with certain soldiers (e.g., 1.23.1; also 36.3). Then, the preparations for the *coup d'état* (1.25–26) show the reader just how the special relationship between Otho and the praetorians was established. It is in this sense one must understand the information that they allegedly intended to kidnap him; in any case, Tacitus is careful to point out that they do not act for the good of the state (*non rei publicae cura*, 1.26.1), which is what distinguishes them from Galba (Keitel 2006, 227). In a parallel way, mainly because of the prefect Laco, Galba is no longer aware of everything that happens (1.24.2, 26.2); he progressively loses the monopoly over knowledge to Otho, as the empire passes into his hands. Finally, Otho's proclamation (1.27–28) shows the commitment of the soldiers won over to his cause. The overturning of power takes place almost as a private matter, and Otho uses a pretext of this sort to go out and meet his partisans (1.27.2). Suetonius mentions another version: Otho faked a fever (*Otho* 6.3).

1.29–35: Galba Removed from the Heart of Imperial Power

The word *ignarus* is used to characterize Galba from the outset as the story returns to him (1.29.1, again at 39.2). Considering that, for Tacitus, one of the characteristics of the principate is the ability of the *princeps* to gather and retain information, Galba's state of ignorance indicates that power eludes him. The same is implied when the rumor of Otho's death reaches Galba without his being able to unmask the lie (1.35.1). Piso is no better informed, presented as “not knowing what was to happen” (*ignarus futuri*, 1.29.2).

This ignorance, reinforced by the circumstances (*neque illis iudicium aut ueritas*, “with them was neither judgment nor truthfulness,” 1.32.1; *inopia ueri*, “paucity of truth,” 1.35.1), weakens him in the most representative features of his imperial role. Thus, the relation between 1.29.1 – the futility of his efforts in religious matters – and 35.1 – the futility of his efforts in military matters – delineates this section as dedicated to the manifestation of his loss of power. Indeed, if the image of Galba as tiresome to “the gods of an empire now belonging to another” (*alieni iam imperii deos*, 1.29.1) is not unrelated to the opening “ignorance of affairs of state as though it were someone else's possession” (*inscitia rei publicae ut alienae*, 1.1.1), it is also reflected in the depiction of Galba donning armor to confront a rival who virtually already has gained the support of the army (1.35.1).

This diminution of power shows itself further in a kind of effacement of Galba through the use of impersonal phrases

(*consultantibus placuit ... seruabatur*, 1.29.1; *missus ... praeceptum ... diffidebatur*, 1.31.2; *praemissus*, 1.34.1; *leuaretur*, 1.35.1; on the effect of passive and impersonal statements, Pigoñ 2008; Joffre 2009) and the fact that Piso is the one to address the cohort that had been watching the palace, in response to the advice of counselors (1.32.2–33). The differences among the latter (underlined by the chiasitic *Titus Vinus manendum*, 1.32.2 / *festinandum ceteris*, 1.33.1; Wille 1983, 240), in as far as they represent disagreement about the identity he was to adopt (1.13), additionally foreground the very existence of a court that takes it upon itself to debate matters of weighty consequence for the entire collective.

This does not preclude all eyes converging on one emperor, who becomes almost an object of entertainment for the Romans, as it appears at 1.32.1: “as if in the circus or theater they had requested an encore of any kind” (*ut si in circo aut theatro ludicrum aliquod postulerent*; also Plut., *Galba* 26.4; on this subject in the *Histories*, see Pomeroy 2006). This concept of the prince as the center view returns at the time of the uprising of the praetorians under Otho: “at the same time, they observe Otho’s face” (*simul uultum Othonis intueri*, 1.81.1).

1.36–39: Otho and the Troops

From the enthusiasm of Otho’s partisans (*ardor*, 1.36.1) to the discouragement of Galba’s adherents (*languentibus omnium studiis*, “everybody’s zeal laying low,” 1.39.2), these lines show Otho taking the upper hand, especially as he enters into a direct relationship with the soldiers. The phrase “in all things slaving for power” (*omnia seruuliter pro dominatione*, 1.36.3) indicates the great ambiguity of this relationship. Likewise, in Otho’s speech designed to ignite the troops, a subtle wordplay is established between use of the first person singular (the speaker) and the second person plural (the soldiers), both of whose destinies are shrewdly presented as interconnected and sometimes fused into one first person plural suggesting solidarity between Otho and those who support him (1.37.2, 38.2). With the same implication, the historian enjoys describing how hierarchical relations are transgressed before and after Otho’s harangue: “neither the tribunes nor the centurions could approach” (*nec tribunis aut centurionibus adeundi locus*, 1.36.1); “no tribune or centurion encouraged them, every man acted on his own impulse and guidance” (*nullo tribunorum centurionumue adhortante, sibi quisque dux et instigator*, 1.38.3).

1.40–49: Galba's Disappearance

Between the grim depiction of Galba as buffeted by the crowd (1.40.1), his death (1.41), and his obituary (1.49), these chapters chronicle the physical disappearance of a principate and the manner in which the next one will, in accordance with the rules of the regime, centralize everything. This is the symbolism of the path of Otho to the Palatine (1.47.2), the reverse of Galba's course; it signifies that he is going to occupy the power that Galba has lost (on the symbolism of places, see Poulle 1998). He then has at his disposal all that formerly constituted the prerogative of his opponents (*omnes principum honores*, "all the honors of the principate," 1.47.1), even their very bodies, whose burial he authorizes (1.47.2). It ensures the survival of the consul designate, Marius Celsus (1.45.2; cf. Plut., *Galba* 27.6), evidence of the extent of his personal power. Likewise, adulation revolves around him (1.45.1) and the Senate session that concluded the day reinforces the sense of a centripetal force: "the senators come running" (*adcurrunt patres*, 1.47.1; also 1.85.3). He likewise takes control over information, which streams right back to him (*Othoni ... nuntiabatur*, "it was announced to Otho," 1.40.1; also 1.44.2, 76.1), but truthfulness still is not guaranteed ("some truthfully, some wrongly," *qui uere, qui falso*, 1.44.2; "the more insincere their demonstrations, the more they performed them," *quantoque magis falsa erant quae fiebant, tanto plura facere*, 1.45.1). In addition, by using *laetitia* ("joyfulness," 1.47.1) of the atmosphere in Rome at Galba's death, Tacitus suggests that Otho's view of the situation imposes itself (cf. *laeta*, 1.44.1); thus Tacitus relates the perversity of the collective gaze working under the effects of the eminent imperial view. The same method, also with the same word, is found again when Vitellius' troops set out (*laetum augurium*, 1.62.3).

Furthermore, on the theme of knowledge, there is a gradation among the three deaths as reported by Tacitus in 1.41–43. About Galba (1.41), the name of the man who stripped his medal off him is accredited to anonymous sources (1.41.1), but his last words are the object of conflicting versions (1.41.2) and there is no certainty regarding the identity of his assassin (1.41.3). About T. Vinius (1.42), it is not known whether he spoke before he died, but it is known who struck him. Finally, Piso's death is reported with some assorted detail (1.43): the name of the centurion who protected his flight, his hiding place, and the identity of both his assassins. In short, the historian appears to be more and more informed. But these progressive stages of understanding that Tacitus has about the last moments of these three men corresponds exactly to the degree of joy that Otho might reveal in learning about their deaths. In the case of Galba, the memory of

imperial dignity restrained his joy; the same was true of T. Vinius because of the memory of their friendship, though this was mitigated by the man's bad reputation. In the case of Piso, the circumstances seemed to allow him to manifest his satisfaction (1.44.1). In this way Tacitus creates a meaningful unity: whereas in previous historiography, versions are produced according to the relationship with the *princeps* ("whether there was hatred or admiration," *ut cuique odium aut admiratio fuit*, 1.41.2, echoing the observations in the preface, "neither with partiality and without hatred," *neque amore ... et sine odio* 1.1.3), he offers a construct that suggests a correlation between what is known of the facts and how much of his feelings the *princeps* can reveal (echoing the second preoccupation of the preface, *inscitia rei publicae*, 1.1.1).

Furthermore, according to Tacitus, Otho had deemed that in the case of Piso he had less ground to hide his joy, as he had been to him both an enemy and a rival: "he believed just and proper the decease of Piso, rival and enemy" (*Pisonis ut inimici et aemuli caede laetari ius fasque credebat*, 1.44.1). This expresses a view according to which the principate, the stake of power between individuals, carries within it the justification for civil wars, or at least for the murders among the different pretenders to the throne. It is found again in the *Annals*, following the death of Britannicus: "many people even excused the crime, weighing the long time of discord between brothers and deeming rule an unsociable activity" (*facinus cui plerique etiam hominum ignoscebant, antiquas fratrum discordias et insociabile regnum aestimantes*, *Ann.* 13.17.1).

Also, by writing that Otho's soldiers conduct themselves against Galba as against an Arsacid sovereign (1.40.2), Tacitus suggests that they perceive the imperial power as a monarchy. To him, "neither the sight of the Capitol, the cult of prominent temples, neither past nor future *principes* were as frightening as to ward off a crime whose avenger is always the successor" (*nec illos Capitoli adspectus et imminentium templorum religio et priores et futuri principes terruere quo minus facerent scelus, cuius ultor est quisquis successit*, 1.40.2). This thinking reflects the personalization of a regime that is long term (*priores et futuri*; *successit*) and under which the politics of each *princeps* are determined in light of his predecessor. This is confirmed regarding the attitude of Vitellius toward those who demanded a reward for participating in the fall of Galba; we find the same specific aspect of the regime (*tradito principibus more*, 1.44.2; already at 1.32.1 *tradito more*; Damon 2003, 189) and its continuity through time (emphasized by the chiasmic *ad praesens, in posterum*, 1.44.2).

Lastly, the regime expects the *princeps* to rely on his army. Otho has thus benefited from the favorable relations he enjoyed with

certain praetorians to take power away from Galba. At the same time this strategy led him to exaggerate the fusion of emperor and army, so that as he takes power the army to an extent does the same: “everything thereafter was done at the discretion of the soldiers” (*omnia deinde arbitrio militum acta*, 1.46.1; also 1.85.1). The question of settling dues paid to centurions (cf. Townend 1964, 358–359; Damon 2003, 193) appears in this context, although in this case, Otho, wishing to satisfy his troops and to accommodate the centurions, takes a measure approved by Tacitus (1.46.2–4) and also used by Vitellius (1.58.1). The difficulty of mastering an army to which he owes his very power is at the heart of the evocation, at the end of the book, of the praetorian uprising in Rome (1.80–85).

3. Methods of Historical Persuasion

Methods of historical persuasion operate both on the narrative and on the ideological level. Even if it is very often difficult to dissociate these two levels (De Vivo 1995), we tend to consider as mostly narrative everything that pertains to criticizing the *principes* in their quality as people, and as mostly ideological everything that, within this criticism, might be useful in the evaluation of the principate as a regime. Below, we will favor the second aspect, so that we do not insist on compensation, a method where certain information either follows or precedes other information that might suggest a positive impression of the *princeps* and ruin its effects. The method is used abundantly in the *Annals* about Tiberius. In the *Histories* it is at work concerning Otho’s character (Perkins 1993). Thus at 1.71 the foregrounding of imperial dignity (also 77.1) is discredited by some thoughts lent to all Romans (*contra spem omnium*, “counter everyone’s expectation”; *plus formidinis adferebant*, “this brought about even greater fear,” 1.71.1) as well as to Otho himself (he had wished to gain a good reputation, 1.71.1), in the same way as though foreshadowing his approaching defeat (1.71.2). The discourse of the narrator furthers this by referring to “hypocritical virtues” (*falsae uirtutes*, 1.71.1). Similarly, at 1.58, Vitellius’ act of sparing Burdo is inserted between two murders of which the second, that of Crispinus the centurion, is recalled with very strong words, suitable for transmitting the historian’s indignation (Damon 2003, 220).

Analogy

Similarities between the scene where Otho is carried in the midst of

the standards (1.36.1) and the one where he sees the heads of the enemy, stuck on pikes and carried on the same standards (1.44.2), make palpable the transfer of power while at the same time underlining the role of the army, as well as suggesting resemblances with the soldiers of Otho, who rejoice to behold the head of Piso (1.44.1; on the assimilation of troops and generals, see Ash 1999). This, incidentally, is a generalization, as Plutarch (*Galba* 27.3) restricts his parade of heads to the one example of Fabius Fabulus (Keitel 2006, 239).

One notices, in passing, some similarities between the accounts of how Otho and Vitellius came to power (as well as with the beginnings of Vespasian; Damon 2003, 213–214): both have grounds to feel threatened by Galba (1.21.1; cf. 52.4); both make use of old personal ties they had with certain soldiers (1.23.1; cf. 70.1). Furthermore, the praetorians and soldiers of Lower Germany have a reserved attitude toward Galba (1.18.3; cf. 55.1). In particular, the manner in which Otho spares the consul designate Marius Celsus (1.45.2) and the craft with which Vitellius shields the prefect from Julius Burdo's fleet (1.58) look similar: "with these brutes, one could kill openly but never forgive except by deceit" (*apud saeuientes occidere palam, ignoscere non nisi fallendo licebat*, 1.58.2); these words offer an idea similar to "but though Otho did not yet have the authority to prevent a crime, he could already order one" (*sed Othoni nondum auctoritas inerat ad prohibendum scelus, iubere iam poterat*, 1.45.2). Here is an ideological implication: whoever chooses to gain power through putting to use his popularity among the army may find himself unable to control it later. The connection between two military insurrections, first under Otho (1.80–85) and then under Vitellius (2.68–69; Damon 2003, 262), partakes of the same meaning.

As for the rest, from the moment of the march on Rome, the camp of Vitellius is attributed such features as in previous chapters describe Otho's *coup d'état*: the concentration of information (1.64.1, 70.1), secret maneuvers (*secretis ... criminationibus*, 1.64.4), rumors about those who are close to power (1.66.2), confiscation of other people's goods or even their bodies – through mention of prostitution (1.66.3) or slavery (1.68.2) – the right to exert, or not to exert, clemency (1.68.2; also 75.2). The very account of this marching (1.63–70) indicates that the provincial lands have been occupied in a similar way to the urban spaces by the praetorians.

Lastly, there is analogy between periods of time when Galba (1.12–20) and later Otho (esp. 1.86–90) are in power in the *Urbs*. The measures taken by them appear as similarly inefficient (Damon 2003, 244), which, in the case of Otho, emerge especially in various allusions to his successor (1.73, 75.2, 77.2) that underline the

pointlessness of his acts. At 1.88.3, *sapientibus ... rei publicae cura*, “the wise ... had concern for the state” (*sapientibus* is counterbalanced by *multi*, “many”), recalls *paucis ... rei publicae amor*, “few had ... love of the state” (1.12.3). Again at 1.88.3, *turbatis rebus alacres et per incerta tutissimi*, “glad amidst confusion and perfectly safe in vagueness,” brings to mind *omne in turbido consilium*, “every plan in disorder” (1.21.1). This last remark specifically concerns Otho: that which formerly favored him (disorder and individualism) now plays against him. This reversal is manifest also in the speech he gives after the praetorian insurrection (below), as well as in the portents as they become unfavorable to him (1.86). When he invokes the unanimous support he enjoys (1.90.2), he seems about as misled on the facts as Galba or Piso appealing to any such consensus (1.15.1, 30.2).

Contrast

Generally speaking, the account of Otho’s *coup d’état* shows him in his way of being, acting, and expressing himself like the regime’s development itself, in contrast with Galba, who does not adjust his behavior to the situation. The reply to a *speculator* bragging that he had killed Otho illustrates Galba’s awareness of order and hierarchy in relationships: “Comrade, who instructed you?” (*Commilito, inquit, quis iussit?* 35.2). Otho, on the contrary, does not conceal his feelings at the news of his enemies’ death (*nullam caedem Otho maiore laetitia excepsisse ... dicitur*, “no murder ever greeted with greater joy by Otho,” 44.1; Geiser 2007, 162). Two *sententiae* summarize this contrast: Galba “suffered ancient severity and excessive strictness” (*nocuit antiquus rigor et nimia seueritas*, 1.18.3); Otho “in all things slaving for power” (*omnia seruliter pro dominatione*, 1.36.3).

In the same way Otho’s attitude contrasts with Galba’s cautiousness (1.39.2): “there is no need to hesitate” (*nullus cunctationis locus est*, 1.38.2). Later, the swiftness of his pace as he goes to meet the troops of Germany (2.11.3) contrasts with the advance of Vitellius who yields to indolence (2.59.2; cf. Suet., *Vit.*, 10.2), again by contrast with the swiftness that characterizes Caecina, his general (1.67.1–2, 68.2, 70.2), and even his own men (*mira inter exercitum imperatoremque diversitas*, “an astonishing difference between the army and its general,” 1.62.1). At the heart of these representations (cf. *tardum Galbae iter*, “Galba’s tardy advance,” 1.6.1) lies the ability of emperors to act as commanders and play their role in catalyzing collective trends (Pomeroy 2006, 179–180).

The contrast between Piso and Otho works in a similar way (Morgan 1993b, 574–575). Piso refers to it in his speech (*comparatione*

Othoni, 1.30.1): traits he attributes to his rival – and which concentrate around luxuriance and prodigality – recall the personalized way of exercising power as had become customary with Nero. Moreover, after his adoption, Piso shows himself rather reserved (esp. 1.19.1), “more able to rule than interested in it” (*quasi imperare posset magis quam uellet*, 1.17.1), whereas Otho had ardently hoped to be adopted (1.13.4) and put himself forward among the soldiers (1.23; Geiser 2007, 199).

Further contrasts can be noted: between Galba, whose counselors are of divided opinion (1.32.2–33), and Vitellius, whose counselors share opinion but are divided over what audience they address (Valens addresses Vitellius himself and Caecina the troops; 1.52.3–53.1); between Piso and T. Vinius in their respective obituaries (below); between Vitellius’ two generals, Valens and Caecina, in the description of their marching (Morgan 1994; cf. Pomeroy 2006, 176–178), where the former deals more with modes of projecting the imperial court, while the latter envisages it from a military point of view. The comparison between these two men continues in Book 2 (cf. 2.30.2–3, 99.2).

Recurrence

The insistence on the old age of Galba, presented as a cause for concern to his contemporaries (1.5.2, 6.1, 7.3, 12.2, 18.3, 22.2, 35.1, 40.2) to the point of being taken up by Otho (1.21.1), by the friends of Vitellius (1.52.3), and accepted by the emperor himself (1.14.1, 16.1 and 3), indicates how much the personality of the *princeps* attracts observation and comment. The many allusions to Vitellius’ *segnitia* (Damon 2003, 210) play a similar role.

Nero’s numerous reminiscences (1.4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 7.3, 8.2, 10.3, 13.2–4, 16.3 and 4, 19.1–2, 21.1, 22.1–2, 23.1, 25.2, 30.2, 31.3, 46, 49.1; more allusively 23.2, 24.1; furthermore 1.51.5, 72.1, 78.2) give a feeling of the determining character of the experience of a principate on those who lived in it, what Tacitus himself may have felt at the death of Domitian (Walker 1960, 162–203). Furthermore, they account for the alteration on society produced by a regime imposing the sovereign as the chief point of reference.

The theme of adulation (e.g., 1.1.1–2, 15.3–4, 29.1, 32.1, 45.1, 47.1, 85.3) is equally symptomatic of a society where power is concentrated in the hands of a few persons, or even only one who becomes the object of attempts at bribery which, under the republic, were spread among many. The adulation is then joined to a feeling often mentioned by Tacitus: hopefulness, *spes* (for this association, see

1.19.1), mentioned as the prime motivation for the Romans (e.g., 1.12.3; also 57.2, 88.3). In the absence of a counterpoise to the emperor, it is enough to have forged a privileged relationship with the emperor or one of his favorites for any hopes to be allowed to grow. The opposite of *spes* is *metus* (cf. 1.19.3, 62.2), which is also exacerbated by the omnipotence of the *princeps*.

In the recollection of how Otho seized power, the idea of a *coup d'état* initiated and animated by a very small number of people (esp. 1.25.1; also 25.2, 27.2, 28, 30.3, 33.1) emphasizes the efficiency of personal ties under the principate.

Finally, there is the theme of discord between troops and officers in Book 1 (Damon 2003, 175). Insubordination is favored by civil war (cf. 1.51.2; also 60), itself the fruit of a situation where the stakes of power are personalized. One may ask in what measure the tensions in the army can be seen as a projection of those existing in the *Urbs* between Senate and people. In any event, the relation between military and social disorder is manifest when following the praetorian insurrection; the Roman nobles flee from a banquet held by Otho without heeding the dignity of their image (1.81.2).

Sources

One rhetorical device is the arrangement of information. Before mentioning the death of Piso, Tacitus relates the heroic act of the *centurio* Sempronius Densus, who shields the flight of Galba's adoptive son (1.43.1). Here is one of the *bona exempla* promised at 1.3.1 (Keitel 2006, 235; cf. the loyalty of four centurions at the proclamation of Vitellius, 1.56.1, 59.1), contrasted with the cowardliness of some, and, oddly, with T. Vinius (1.42). This, however, does not explain the divergence that can be observed from Plutarch (*Galba* 26.8–10) and Cassius Dio (64.7.4–5); according to these two authors, Densus shields not Piso but Galba. One reason would be to emphasize the isolation of Galba (Damon 2003, 186). Another factor may be, as suggested above, that Tacitus intimates a hierarchy between the death of Galba, which is not very well known since it was hardly glorious for Otho, and that of Piso, better known insofar as the new *princeps* saw no reason to conceal the joy it afforded him. It was in his interest, therefore, to concentrate around Piso the details known to him.

Elsewhere, Tacitus groups information of similar nature in such a way as to make apparent the significance of facts (cf. *Ann.* 12.41.5). While Plutarch discusses Otho's intrigues with the troops in two stages, first as he accompanies Galba from Italy to Spain, then in the first days of January (Plut., *Galba* 20, 23), Tacitus fuses them in one

single mention (1.21–23; Galtier 2003, 39). In this way he foregrounds the need for privileged relations with the troops. Similarly at 1.20 feature two measures by Galba (the recovery of Nero's donatives and the removal of an officer) that are generally considered postponed (Damon 2003, 145–146); in as far as they do not fully meet the objective, they illustrate the difficulty of Galba to act in line with the situation. What is more, while Plutarch (*Galba* 1.1) and Suetonius (*Otho* 7.1) record Otho's coming to the Capitol for a sacrifice on January 16, according to Tacitus he went on the evening of January 15 (1.47.2). The historian thus aligns a temporal unity – the day of January 15, 69, the narration of which extends over chapters 1.27–47 – with a process of mastering space, of which the Capitol is a symbol. In the preceding lines, this hill is mentioned both as a key location, which Otho needs to be prevented from taking (1.33.1) or onto which Galba could retreat (1.39.1), and as a symbolic place (1.40.2). Also on the topic of time, note Tacitus' propensity in *Histories* 1 to refer to the sequence of events (Cogitore 2002, 49–50 speaks of “effets d'annonce,” “announcement effects”). Strengthening and exploiting the distance between the narrator (who knows the sequence of events), the reader (who learns it or receives its confirmation), and the actors of the past (who remain ignorant of it), this practice assumes many functions related to characterization or creating a dramatic atmosphere (cf. Pagán 2006; on anticipations in the *Annals*, Devillers 1994, 109–117).

Lastly, omission is a device that may be delicate to identify, since it is arbitrary to assume for a historian a knowledge of facts left unmentioned. At 1.47.1, when the Senate grants the honors of the principate to Otho, there is no mention of a speech that the new prince is supposed to have given before the senators. It is true that to have him express himself only before the praetorians is more consistent with the explanation Tacitus gives of his rise to power, namely, that he made the best of a personal relationship with the soldiers. In addition, in keeping with the summary given by Suetonius about this brief intervention (*positaque breui oratione quasi raptus de publico et suscipere imperium ui coactus gesturusque communi omnium arbitrio*, “after giving a brief account of himself, alleging that he had been carried off in the streets and forced to undertake the rule, which he would exercise in accordance with the general will,” *Otho* 7.1; cf. Dio 64.8.1), Otho would then have shown a concern for the common good that hardly accords with the state of mind attributed to him by Tacitus, who insists, at this point, upon his personal feelings (cf. 1.44).

Some aspects of Tacitean style have been well studied, including their relation to the message of the author; this is the case for the *sententiae* (on *Histories* 1, Keitel 2006; for the whole of the *Histories*, Stegner 2004; for *Annals* 1–6, Sinclair 1995; generally Kirchner 2001). Here we discuss another aspect: the literary echoes of other historians.

After the eleven introductory chapters, Tacitus begins his narration by mentioning the arrival of a letter (*litterae adferuntur*, 1.12.1). One is reminded of the beginning of Caesar's *Bellum Ciuile* (*litteris ... redditis*, Caes., *Ciu.* 1.1.1). Yet there is a difference: the letter sent by Caesar provokes a debate in the Senate, while the one received by Galba occasions a kind of private counsel (*comitia imperii*, 1.14.2). The expression (on which Geiser 2007, 180; also Lambrecht 2006) betrays how power, once accessible to the people, has been relocated and becomes the property of a small circle.

An echo of Sallust will be interpreted along the same lines: compare “action was needed more than deliberation” (*facto magis quam consulto opus esset*, 1.62.1) and “there is need, in such danger, for action and not discussion” (*facto, non consulto in tali periculo opus esse*, Sal., *Cat.* 43.3). In both historians, this idea features in indirect discourse, in Sallust attributed to the conspirator C. Cornelius Cethegus, member of the senatorial order, and in Tacitus attributed more generally to the soldiers of Vitellius. One maps the development: from now onward, the troops are the acting force for whoever wants to gain power.

At 1.40.1, Tacitus describes the state of mind among the Romans immediately before the fall of Galba: “neither tumult nor calm but the silence of great fright and great ire” (*non tumultus, non quies, quale magni metus et magnae irae silentium est*). The expression recalls Livy 1.29.2–3: “there was not in fact that tumult or fear that is common of taken cities, but grim silence and tacit pain transfixing the minds of all” (*non quidem fuit tumultus ille nec pavor qualis captarum esse urbium solet ... sed silentium triste ac tacita maestitia ita defixit omnium animos*, cf. Damon 2003, 182). Livy depicts the feelings of the inhabitants of Alba before the destruction of their city and their transfer to Rome. The echo is perhaps not irrelevant: the passage from one sovereignty (that of Galba) to another (that of Otho) is equivalent to that which, under the republic, was a displacement of a population from one city to another, almost a “re-foundation” (cf. “one would have thought this a different Senate and a different people,” *alium crederes senatum, alium populum*, 1.45.1; furthermore 2.90.1). One recalls certain Tacitean imagery, both in the *Histories* and in the *Annals*, in which it is implied that the *princeps* henceforth consumes the city (Rouveret 1991, 3066–3072; cf. Sailor 2008, 191, for nuances; on the *urbs capta* theme, cf. 1.82.2 – in the *Histories* 1–3, e.g., Keitel 2006, 234 n. 32).

4. Types of Passages

Foreign Affairs

Accounts relating to foreign affairs regularly echo through the rest of the work (on the *Annals*, Devillers 1994, 261–286; also Keitel 1978). As early as chapters 1.8–11, the recollection of the situation in the provinces is by and large subordinated to the situation in Rome, including allusions. Thus, at 1.9.1, the contempt inspired by the old age and infirmity of the legate of Upper Germany, Hordeonius Flaccus (*senecta ac debilitate pedum inualidum*, “made invalid by age and weakness”), sounds like an echo of the feelings that Galba inspires (*inualidum senem*, 1.6.1). In one of his later appearances, the same legate is said to be *segnis* (1.56.1), an echo of Vitellius, *segne ingenium* (1.52.4).

In the same way, the only episode in Book 1 formally identifiable as an account of foreign affairs, namely, the fighting against the Rhoxolani (1.79), opens and ends with two explicit references to internal affairs: “Since attention was turned toward the civil war, there was no heed for external affairs” (*conuersis ad ciuile bellum animis, externa sine cura habebantur*, 1.79.1) and “[Otho] taking for himself the glory as if he himself had been fortunate in war and expanded the empire by his leaders and armies” ([*Othone*] *gloriam in se trahente, tamquam et ipse felix bello et suis ducibus suisque exercitibus rem publicam auxisset*, 1.79.5). This latter observation shows the tendency that emperors have to present themselves as responsible for the entirety of military operations even when they are far from operating in the field themselves (cf. Tac., *Ann.* 15.18.1).

In addition, in the first books of the *Histories*, one can hardly speak of “foreign affairs” since the name of the new emperor determines itself over both the provinces and the *Urbs* (1.4.2; Sailor 2008, 188–189). *Histories* 1.7.1–2 conveys the effect that the announcement of events that occurred in Africa and Germany (also, further, 1.26.1) had on the city. Likewise, from the beginning of Otho’s rule, the news that arrives from the province modifies the state of mind of the Romans (1.50.1) and it is by taking into account the legions of Germany that Otho designates Verginius consul (1.77.2). The influence is reciprocal and the city itself is an example followed by the provinces and the camps: “the name of Rome and the Senate’s prestige were of great weight” (*erat grande momentum in nomine urbis ac praetexto senatus*, 1.76.2; also 30.3).

Speeches

Histories 1 contains four direct speeches: (1) Galba on the adoption of Piso at 1.15–16; (2) Piso to the Roman soldiers at 1.29–30; (3) Otho to his troops at the moment of succeeding Galba at 1.37–38; and (4) Otho to his troops after a mutiny at 1.83–84. Speeches 1, 2, and 3 (by Galba, Piso, and Otho at 1.37–38) belong within the same narrative sequence, the succession of Galba; speeches 2, 3, and 4 (by Piso and two by Otho) are addressed to Roman soldiers. Such an overlap and integration of speeches into the *Histories* has been studied in a general way by Keitel (1991; also 1987, 1993). Devillers (2003) has paid attention to mutual links between the speeches of Book 1; we shall here focus on a few aspects.

Galba's speech (1.15–16; Welwei 1995) is belied by the facts because its content is not always coherent with the narrative (e.g., Chilver 1979, 75), because the adoption that he supports backfires, and because he claims a consensus among the Romans (and even the gods; *deorum hominumque consensu ad imperium uocatum*, "called to rule by unanimous accord of gods and men," 1.15.1; also 1.30.2, 32.2), all while he is being criticized in Rome and in the provinces. One reason for this might be that his attitude and the moral values he defends are inappropriate for the situation.

The speeches at 1.29–30 and 1.37–38 are given on the same day, to similar interlocutors. To take only one example, both orators begin by evoking their destiny (Geiser 2007, 246), but where Piso associates it with the state (1.29.2), Otho associates it with the destiny of the soldiers (1.37.1–2). Given Otho's victory, this suggests the greater efficiency of such individualistic strategies. In fact, Piso's speech takes place in times of trouble (*ut turbidis rebus*, 1.31.1), circumstances that are in Otho's favor (*omne in turbido consilium*, 1.21.1).

The second of Otho's speeches (1.83.2–84) features in the account of the praetorian uprising, which validates the reversal of his situation. He is no longer the "challenger" he was in the first half of the book; he no longer seeks only the support of the troops, but is concerned to preserve power, no more by its conquest, and sees the *turbidae res* as a nuisance (1.83.1) rather than as a circumstance that might work in his favor. His speech, especially when compared to the one he gave at 1.37–38, illuminates this development. First, while on January 15 he speaks "to incite the army" (*accendendos*, 1.36.3), later he no longer has this intention (*neque ... ut accenderem*, 1.83.2). His purpose could even be the opposite: "to admonish and appease the minds of the soldiers" (*ad perstringendos mulcendosque militum animos*, 1.85.1). He who had pursued the satisfaction of a personal ambition now puts the state first (emphasized by the polyptotes *res publica* / *rei*

publicae at 1.83.3, *senators / senatoribus* at 83.4) and states the need to respect hierarchy, both military (1.83.3–84.2; compare 1.37.4) and social (1.84.3–4), which he justifies by the imperatives of an imminent battle (*imus ad bellum*, “we are going to war,” 1.83.3; compare *non ad bellum uos ... uoco*, “I am not calling you to war,” 1.38.2). The end of his speech nonetheless presents an “imperial” reading of Roman history, according to a continuity from kings to *principes*, uniting the republic (1.84.4); this concept is found in the Lyons Tablet (e.g., De Vivo 1980, 76).

As regards indirect speeches, these have their traditional role, which is the characterization of persons (esp. Utard 2002) and the illumination of historical discourse. In this respect those that present the conflicting opinions of T. Vinius (1.32.2) and other counselors (1.33) on the attitude that Galba should adopt at the time of the *coup d'état* amplify an idea that is dear to Tacitus: a small number of individuals who are close to the emperor assume for themselves the debate on affairs that concern the collective and even see therein an opportunity to settle their private quarrels: “endurance of private hatred leading to state losses” (*priuati odii pertinacia in publicum exitium*, 1.33.2).

Portraits and Obituaries

At 1.10, the fact that references to Mucianus and Vespasian are dominated by the announcement of the destiny that awaits them corresponds to the desire to make the competition for empire a theme evoked from the situation in the provinces. More specifically, the portrait of Mucianus (1.10.1–2) exemplifies the life of a noble dominated by the experience of the principate ever since his youth when, held at a distance by the emperor, he identifies with one in exile, until the moment when he prefers to make a gift of his imperial power rather than exercise it himself. This portrait is not unlike what is said about Otho at 1.13.3–4: the same inclinations to luxury, the same disgrace, the same ulterior proximity to an emperor, the same aptitude for the best as for the worst. Otho, however, will desire power for himself where Mucianus will not.

The theme of proximity to power manifests itself in the interest given to those who are close to the *principes* (e.g., Chilver 1979, 68; Geiser 2007, 176). At 1.6.1, Tacitus mentions T. Vinius and Laco, and at 1.13.1, he shows how their power superimposes itself over that of the *princeps*: “the real power of the principate was divided between the consul Titus Vinius and Cornelius Laco the praetorian prefect” (*potentia principatus diuisa in Titum Vinium consulem, Cornelium*

Laconem praetorii praefectum). Corresponding to these passages is, for the case of Vitellius, the interest in Caecina and Valens (1.52.3; 53.1–2), which conveys the idea of a confusion between private and public: “Caecina, painfully bitter, resolved to overthrow everything and conceal private wounds under evils of the state” (*Caecina aegre passus miscere cuncta et priuata uolnera rei publicae malis operire statuit*, 1.53.2). We could also recall Tigellinus, who acted sometimes even without Nero’s knowledge: “having corrupted Nero to all crimes he dared to commit, some without his knowledge” (*corrupto ad omne facinus Nerone, quaedam ignaro ausus*, 1.72.1). This same portrait of Tigellinus is an occasion to recall the significance of personal relationships: “dreadful person ... finds private thanks against public hatred” (*pessimus quisque ... aduersus publicum odium priuatam gratiam praeeparat*, 1.72.2).

The account of the reign of Galba ends with three obituaries (1.48–49; on this type of passage, see Pomeroy 1991; in Tacitus, Syme 1958; Devillers 1994, 293–306; also Gingras 1992), returning, in reverse order, to the three characters whose death had been evoked in 1.40–43, that is to say, Piso (1.48.1 = 1.43), T. Vinius (1.48.2–4 = 1.42), and Galba himself (1.49 = 1.40–41; cf. Wille 1983, 241; Geiser 2007, 264); this arrangement, incidentally, seals the unity of the section 1.40–49. The obituaries of Piso and Vinius form a pair, as indicated by the comparison between the poverty of the former and the wealth of the latter (1.48.4). Their composition is similar: events that set them at a remove from the Julio-Claudians, until they draw nearer to the throne with the rise of Galba, which proves fatal to them. Thus is confirmed the lesson from the brief account of Mucianus and his confrontation with Otho: proximity to power is perilous (also 1.52.4 on Vitellius).

Understood from the same angle is the final note on Galba, the climax of the series. The “long neglect” of his corpse (*diu neglectum*, 1.49.1) is an exaggeration (he was killed on January 15 and buried on the 16th), which can be explained by the weight of the imperial office. In his case also, the relationship with previous *principes* is taken into consideration: “he went through five principates favored by fortune” (*quinque principes prospera fortuna emensus*, 1.49.2). The possible proximity to the highly controversial Calvia Crispinilla (*apud Galbam, Othonem, Vitellium inlaesa*, “unharmd by Galba, Otho, Vitellius,” 1.73; on this woman, Morgan 2000) yet invites one to not necessarily see virtue in this. Besides, Galba’s prosperity is attributed to a kind of mediocrity, not of either nobility or wealth but of character: “he had from his family nobility of old, great riches; he himself had medium intelligence, more free of vice than exceeding in virtues” (*uetus in familia nobilitas, magnae opes; ipsi medium ingenium, magis extra uitia*

quam cum uirtutibus, 1.49.2). This made him keep some distance from power; during the republican era when engagement with public matters was expected, this attitude would have been seen as lax, but under the principate when power belonged to one person only – jealous even of those who merely seemed able to contest it – it passed for wisdom (1.49.3). When circumstances put him in the spotlight, his limitations became apparent: “he seemed better as a private person and, by the agreement of all, capable of empire if only he had not ruled” (*maior priuato uisus dum priuatus fuit et omnium consensu capax imperii nisi imperasset*, 1.49.4).

Seen as such, this obituary says just as much about Galba as about the principate as a regime. It shows the central role of the imperial function at the moment when the manner in which an individual behaves and how that behavior is perceived are determined. In this respect, Galba’s reputation rests on a misunderstanding: the distance he puts between himself and authority is seen as strategic – possibly reminiscent of the way Brutus established the republic – when it stems from an apathetic nature (cf. *gnarus sub Nerone temporum, quibus inertia pro sapientia fuit*, “aware of circumstances under Nero, where inertia was seen as wisdom,” Ag. 6.3). The experience of power is like a trial of truth and reveals his failure to function. This idea of power as a trial of truth returns in the following chapter on Vespasian, in a prolepsis that contrasts him with Galba, since “unlike all his predecessors, he is the only one who changed for the better” (*solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est*, 1.50.4). According to such a view, then, the empire really lends itself to those who can live up to its dimensions. Such a conception resembles that of the *optimus princeps*.

Prodigies, Portents, Predictions

The interest in prodigies is announced at 1.3.2 (as regards precisely *Histories* 1, Guittard 2003; also Morgan 1993a; on religion in the *Histories*, Scott 1968). Between republic and principate, their interpretation had seen an evolution: once considered as a sign of rupture with the *pax deorum* affecting the entire society, they are, under the new rule, interpreted as *omina* bringing information concerning the *princeps* (or the future *princeps*). One even suspects that some may have been forged *a posteriori*, or at least to have found their full meaning only *post euentum* (1.10.3). Tacitus is aware of this development (cf. 1.86.1) and of this personalization of prodigies, which is absolute with Vitellius, who “is himself the chief prodigy” (*praecipuum ipse Vitellius ostentum erat*, 3.56.2).

At 1.18.1, when a tempest unleashes before he enters the soldiers' camp to announce his decision to adopt Piso, Galba, for his part, does not interpret this prodigy in the traditional way (*obseruatum id antiquitus comitiis dirimendis non terruit Galbam quo minus in castra pergeret*, "these phenomena, which when observed in antiquity were cause for suspending elections, were not frightening enough to stop Galba from visiting the camp"); rather, he does not see in this any indications for himself. However, an interpretation along these lines was possible and it is, slightly paradoxically, Otho who deploys it in his first speech: "the extraordinary tempest through which the gods showed they disapproved of an adoption with bad auspices" (*notabili tempestate etiam deos infaustam adoptionem auersantes*, 1.38.1). Again, Otho seems to have assimilated to the changed situation better (Pagán 2006, 203, discerns here an element of contrast between these two men). He sees what he can get, for his own account, from a prediction such as the haruspices gave to Galba (1.27.1), and he consults some astrologers (1.22.1–2). Tacitus associates these with Poppea and secrets of the imperial house (*secreta Poppaeae*, 1.22.2), that is to say, with the power of one family, which does not always act before the eyes of the public.

Subsequently, in the camp of Vitellius one finds the aptitude to interpret signs according to one's own affairs (1.62.3). By contrast (Guittard 2003, 16), the list of prodigies (on this type of passage, Devillers 2006) that is featured toward the end of the book ends with a phenomenon that is hardly favorable to Otho (also 1.89.3). Significantly, Otho is not mentioned among those who interpret signs. Might this suggest that he lacks the ability to turn prodigies into *omina* and that his power is beginning to destabilize?

5. Conclusion

The image of Otho leaving Rome to confront the armies of Vitellius closes Book 1 of the *Histories*:

Clamor uocesque uolgi ex more adulandi nimiae et falsae: quasi dictatorem Caesarem aut imperatorem Augustum prosequerentur, ita studiis uotisque certabant, nec metu aut amore, sed ex libidine seruitii, ut in familiis: priuata cuique stimulatio et uile iam decus publicum. Profectus Otho quietem urbis curasque imperii Saluio Titiano fratri permisit.

(*Hist.* 1.90.3)

The crowd's shouting and acclamations were unusual and fake, as

shows of adulation; escorting, as it were, Caesar the dictator or the emperor Augustus, so much they outdid each other in zeal and good wishes, not out of fear or love, but out of love for servitude as among slaves: each had a private motive, and public decency was debased. Otho set out, leaving the peace of the city and the cares of empire in the charge of his brother, Salvius Titianus.

These lines synthesize all of the themes deployed by the historian. There are the two great preoccupations of the preface, one epistemological (*falsae*) and the other on the topic of personal ties with the emperor (*nec metu aut amore* in echo of 1.1.3, *neque amore ... et sine odio*), a sign of a situational community between historian of facts and their actors. Also present are the – elsewhere well-deployed – themes of adulation, converging around the emperor (cf. the idea of *certare*, recurring at 1.44.2 *certatim*; 45.1 *certare*; 47.1 *certant* to mark adherence to Otho; Keitel 2006, 242), and also the confusion between public and private (*pruata* / *publicum*). This last trait is itself associated with the emperor's grasp of the collective, shown by the comparison between the people and a group of slaves, as well as the final clause that shows Otho as he entrusts the state as a personal belonging to his closest relative. The fact that this situation has its origin in the establishment of a new regime is furthermore underscored by a recollection of the characters of Caesar and Augustus.

This concentration of power, presented as a major historical fact throughout the book, is also a determining factor in the writing of history. Since it obstructs access to information, it leads Tacitus to adopt a subjective method of reconstructing the past. Similarly, on the level of ideology, it implies that the regime will function well only if the *princeps* is well suited (the idea of *boni principes* is explicit at 1.46.4), if not the very best (and, as such, consistent with the propaganda of Trajan). This is why – and here we return to the historiographical enterprise – the circulation of knowledge about previous reigns and their mode of functioning seems required to provide useful lessons for the success of subsequent principates (cf. Plin., *Pan.* 53.5). In this sense, the quest for knowledge to which the historian dedicates himself, even if he recognizes it as contrary to the logic of a regime that tends to confiscate knowledge, is paradoxically of such a nature as to improve it. This, however, can only be the case when the *princeps* creates the conditions for free speech, capable of generating a discourse within which the historian will find material for reflection on the modalities of governance. Possibly this is the *uber securaque materia* to which Tacitus refers in the preface (1.1.4).

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The commentary of Tacitus' *Histories* in five volumes by Heubner (1963–1982) remains a standard reference; originally limiting most of his observations to linguistic remarks and literary parallels, he makes a greater number of historical observations from the second volume on. The work of Chilver adopts essentially a historical point of view; it is useful mainly for Books 1–2 (1979), the commentary of Books 4–5 (Chilver and Townend 1985) being more succinct; for Book 3, Wellesley (1972) is valuable for the establishment of the text. Finally, two recent commentaries consider these various aspects together, delivering an overall reading attentive to the modalities of narrative elaboration: Damon (2003) for *Histories* 1, Ash (2007) for *Histories* 2. Furthermore, Ash (1999) offers a comprehensive interpretation of the work. As regards more properly chapters 1.1–49, it has been the subject of two recent readings: Keitel (2006) insists upon the themes of *amicitia*, *fides*, and *adulatio*; Geiser (2007, 153–282) centers her work on the representation of Galba. The understanding of the *Histories* owes much also to the articles regularly published by M. G. Morgan (for our purposes, esp. 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 2000). Lastly, among the studies on Tacitus that have foregrounded some techniques of composition and history writing, we cite Walker (1960), Ginsburg (1981), and Aubrion (1985).

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PART III: Interpretations

10

Deliberative Oratory in the Annals and the Dialogus

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1. Introduction

Few would now deny the importance of rhetoric in the works of the ancient historians. Numerous studies have delineated history's rhetorical underpinnings in matters of style, argumentative commonplaces, or the construction of entire speeches. Yet the nature, extent, and ramifications of that relationship still vex modern scholars (for an overview of the issues and recent discussions, see Feldherr 2009, esp. chs. 1–3 and 12–14). Prudence also cautions us against the facile application of theories taken from handbooks, manuals, or dialogues, to historical – or any other rhetorically informed – texts. Theoretical works, such as Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's dialogues, or Quintilian's first-century *Institutio Oratoria* ("The Orator's Education"), provide useful guidelines, to be sure, but these authors have not left behind sustained pieces of historical writing. As a result we face the somewhat awkward problem of gathering precepts and principles from one group of authors to measure against the writings of a wholly separate group, the historians themselves.

Tacitus is, of course, one notable exception to that separation of theorist from practitioner. Best known for historical works, he also wrote a dialogue on oratory, the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* ("Dialogue on the Orators"), dated to around 100 CE (his authorship was once questioned, cf. Mayer 2001, 18–22 for this issue and 22–27 on the date of publication). Little, if any, headway has been made, however,

in reconciling the two groups of writings to one another. The *Dialogus* for so long has been thought little more than a statement about the decline of oratory, especially in moral terms (Winterbottom 1964). Modern readers therefore often emphasize similar attitudes across his works: Tacitus' famed irony and occasional (if striking) pessimism would seem to accord well with the idea of oratorical demise in the imperial dispensation. Of late, however, interpretation of the *Dialogus* has moved away from the problem of decline. For good reason: it is curious that so many of the "modern" stylistic principles defended by Marcus Aper in the *Dialogus* also describe Tacitus' own writing habits (cf., e.g., Dominik 2007).

The question of oratorical decline and its relationship to Tacitus' opinion of the principate as an institution is too broad to answer here, but in one area the *Dialogus* may allow us to catch a glimpse of his rhetorical handiwork across genres: deliberative oratory. Two essays discuss the potential significance of deliberative rhetoric in Roman historians: Luce (1993) demonstrates how author and audience took for granted remarkable flexibility in the categories suggested by the system. Levene (1999) focuses more closely on the ethical tension that underpins the opposition of *utilitas* ("utility," "expediency") to *honestas* ("honorability") and how that opposition shapes the moral aims of Tacitus' first long work, the *Histories*.

This essay builds on these studies, but will further examine how the *Dialogus* helps us to understand the use of deliberative oratory in creating arguments and narrative in the *Annals*. Specifically, it details the shared conception of deliberative common to Marcus Aper's first speech and to a selection of scenes and authorial digressions from the *Annals*. Levene has rightly suggested that a historian's speeches "are not merely influenced by rhetorical theory but can themselves, by virtue of being placed in a narrative, act as the vehicles for an implicit statement of the author's own theoretical standpoint" (Levene 1999, 197). The same can be said for a rhetorical dialogue such as the *Dialogus*, whose speeches often employ the very rhetorical principles that are the subject of debate. Commonalities in the *Dialogus* and *Annals* indicate how Tacitus effectively used the malleable potential of deliberative oratory in both works. In what follows, three main topics will be handled in succession: (1) the deliberative system in Greek and Roman authors; (2) the *Dialogus*, which, through its analysis of Roman oratory, foregrounds the deliberative categories more directly than Tacitus' historical oeuvre; (3) the *Annals*, in which the traditional terms of deliberative form a key element in Tacitus' composition of and reflections on history. The emphasis at the broadest level will be on these texts' shared deliberative basis – how does this one aspect of rhetoric unite them in ways that could prove fruitful for future

analysis?

2. Deliberative Oratory: The Background

Persuasion underlies the rhetorical art, but each of the three main genres of rhetoric had a specific suasive function. Deliberative oratory served to convince an audience to follow one course of action over another. Ancient theorists distinguished it from the two other genres: forensic, which dealt with court cases, and epideictic, which sought to demonstrate (or deny) the value of a person or thing. Deliberative looked to the future, bearing not on events of the past (as in a trial) nor on the immediate present (as in speeches of praise or invective), but rather on those to come: which plan of action ought to be taken?

In theory, deliberative was the political genre *par excellence*. A speaker would advise a citizen body or select group on the practical and moral exigencies that required action: to declare war, sue for peace, appoint a special command, demonstrate clemency toward the vanquished, or impose new laws for the public good. In reality the distinctions were blurred, as forensic oratory became a key avenue for settling political differences or acquiring social standing in the community (and hence the opportunity to advance a political career).

Before turning to the *Dialogus* and *Annals*, an outline of the genre's system will illuminate the backdrop against which Tacitus wrote. The following survey is schematic and should be regarded only as a general overview. It also bears noting at the outset that one of the most salient features among ancient authors is the tendency to disagree, either explicitly or implicitly, in their definitions of deliberative oratory and its persuasive goals. Cicero and Tacitus emphasized different aspects in different works or within a single one. Furthermore, when we turn from the handbooks to actual practice, either to real speeches or to those inserted into works of literature, the rhetoricians' precepts do not determine absolutely but only imperfectly guide the content and structure: "both those who composed deliberative speeches and the critics who listened to them had a lively appreciation of the various arguments and divisions that a speaker could deploy" (Luce 1993, 76).

What were the guidelines? Ancient practitioners and theorists detailed a set of "aims" (Greek *tele* [singular *telos*]; Latin (usually) *fines* [singular *finis*], also *partes* [singular *pars*]). These were categories around which a speaker could organize arguments (*loci* [singular *locus*,

“(common-)place for argument”], a calque of the Greek term *topoi* [singular *topos*]). Different aims were typically allotted to each genre. Greek authors used them to describe and demarcate types of oratory (for deliberative, see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1358a–1366a = 1.3–1.8; Anaximenes, *Rhetoric to Alexander* 1421b–1425b; Hermogenes, *On Issues* 76–79; cf. Lausberg 1998). The most rigidly systematic division belongs to Aristotle, who conveniently assigned each genre a distinct pair containing the chief aim and its opposite (which was to be avoided). Forensic speech involves matters of justice (*dikaion*) and injustice (*adikon*); epideictic, the honorable (*kalon*) and the shameful (*aischron*); deliberative, the useful (*sympheron*) and the harmful (*blaberon*).

Accordingly a speaker should demonstrate the usefulness of his proposals and (possibly) the negative effects of failing to follow them. To build city walls (to use an imaginary example) protects a city; to fail to do so could prove disastrous in the case of attack. Yet even in Aristotle’s systematic take the categories were porous, as a speaker could always borrow from another genre to complement a line of argument. Thus (to return to our imaginary example), erecting city walls might also be said to be *kalon* – Aristotle’s aim for epideictic – since, in addition to being useful, they tangibly demonstrate the splendor and importance of a city.

Others did not share Aristotle’s system. Anaximenes marked off for deliberative Aristotle’s chief aims from all three genres, superadding the lawful (*nomimon*), pleasurable (*hedy*), and easily accomplishable (*radion*). Furthermore, should a speaker be unable to argue these points, he ought then to press the line that an action is possible (*dynaton*) and, when difficult, that it is necessary (*anankaion*) (*Rhetoric to Alexander* 1421b). Isocrates’ speeches (to cite one of many examples from among the Athenian orators) employ a similarly broad range of aims.

For our immediate purposes Roman authors reveal the most about the system, even if in them its various strands grow increasingly intertwined. The main sources are (the anonymous) *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 3.2–9; Cicero, *de Inventione* 2.156–176, *de Oratore* 1.141, 2.333–340 (and on 3.178–181 see below), *Partitiones Oratoriae* 83–97; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 3.8; Tacitus, *Dialogus* 5.3–10.8 and 31.2. The anonymous author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* posits *utilitas* (“expediency,” “practicality,” “utility”) as the main aim of deliberative. He further divides expediency into *utilitas tuta* (“utility concerned with preservation”) and *utilitas honesta* (“utility concerned with honorability”). That division is significant for the Roman tradition, as the conflict between the useful and the honorable, though not addressed outright as an ethical dilemma, increasingly weighs on

other theorists of deliberative.

Cicero provides numerous definitions that tend to cluster around the relationship of *utilitas* to *honestas*. The handbook-like treatise, *de Inuentione*, explicitly revises Aristotle's categories, naming both *utilitas* and *honestas*. Already in this, Cicero's earliest rhetorical work, *honestas* is associated with the similar term *dignitas* ("excellence," "dignity"). In particular it comes to describe the group of hybrid values which have a share in both *honestas* and *utilitas*, but which the orator should be careful to designate as honorable (2.166–168). Among these are *gloria* ("renown," "glory"), individual *dignitas* ("status," "authority"), *amplitudo* ("greatness," "importance"), and *amicitia* ("social connectedness," "friendship"). In the treatise it emerges that *utilitas* and *honestas* were hardly watertight categories. The honorable could prove to have considerable utility and in turn honorability contained a practical, utilitarian component as well.

The later *Partitiones Oratoriae* takes *utilitas* as the main aim of deliberative. Cicero eventually canvasses the potential conflict with *honestas*, almost as an afterthought and without modifying the basic definition (89). The categorization there reoccurs in *de Oratore*, when Crassus briefly divides the genres based on a single aim, assigning *utilitas* to deliberative (1.141). At this point in the text Crassus self-admittedly repeats the standard precepts of the rhetoricians (*ista ... communia et contrita praecepta*, 1.137), and only in Book 2 will Antonius return to the question with greater subtlety and detail. *Dignitas* ought to be the main aim of deliberative, but circumstances often force us to argue for *utilitas*: *nemo est enim, praesertim in tam clara ciuitate, quin putet expetendam maxime dignitatem, sed uincit utilitas plerumque, cum subest ille timor ea neglecta ne dignitatem quidem posse retineri* ("Everyone, especially in such a renowned city, thinks that dignity must be pursued above all else, but often expedience wins out for fear that, by disregarding it, our dignity can't be retained"). *Honestas* appears only once in Antonius' discussion: *certatur, utrum honestati potius an utilitati consulendum sit* ("There is debate about whether we ought to have greater consideration for honorability or utility," 2.335).

The insistence on *dignitas* may seem slightly odd, especially given the tradition that opposed *utilitas* to *honestas*. Its place becomes clearer when considering the rhetorical design of the *de Oratore*. *Dignitas* is an important aspect of the ideal orator's public image – Cicero emphasizes the value across his oeuvre – and of the Roman people's dignity (Antonius mentions it in the discussion of deliberative at 2.337). Through verbal associations, Cicero characterizes the genre so as to collapse its definition into the idealization of the orator and the celebration of the Roman state. The rhetorical strategy thus draws on

traditional Roman values and reinscribes them within a technical definition of the rhetorical art.

Beyond the immediate advantages for the persuasive design of the *de Oratore*, the focus on *dignitas* in Book 2 foreshadows a later example of deliberative oratory in Book 3. There Cicero places a model speech in the mouth of Crassus, who makes a case for the employment of prose rhythm to adorn oratorical language. He works his way through a range of aims, such as ease and necessity: *non est res tam difficilis quam necessaria* (“a matter not so difficult as necessary,” 3.176). Prose rhythm is useful, supplies *dignitas* to speech and even *uenustas* (“charm,” “attractiveness”; on which cf. Krostenko 2001, 40–51). After some analogies to the physical structures of natural objects, Cicero remarks on the way in which, like the objects of nature, human crafts are designed for pleasure (*uoluptas*, 3.180) and protection (*salus*, 3.180, related to *incolumitas* [“safety,” cf. 3.178], and ultimately a part of *utilitas*). The term *facile* (181) concludes the exhortation, as it returns us to the idea with which Cicero began the argument (*non difficilis*).

The different and seemingly contradictory versions of deliberative still allow for some general conclusions. First, the system was remarkably malleable. The aims are neither uniform nor exclusive, hence the proliferation of different items and apparent inconsistency among theorists. Beyond this, authors could employ the traditional *topoi* while reshaping them to suit the local needs of a given text. This is the case with Cicero, in whose works it is hard to find a uniform point of view though attempts have been made – the later *de Officiis*, with its insistence on *honestum*, is often thought to be the clearest exposition of Cicero’s true views. To be sure Cicero there clearly privileges *honestas* over *utilitas*, but his predilections derive in many respects from the philosophical coloring of that text, which is occupied with matters of ethics and doggedly pushes a Stoic point of view. Besides, Cicero does not thoroughly reject *utilitas* in *de Officiis* but ultimately equates it with *honestas* on the grounds that any truly useful act must also be honorable.

Real speeches, including Cicero’s own, exhibited considerable flexibility in the material under discussion and the moral value attached to terms such as *utilitas* or *honestas*. In practice Cicero calls on the system to shape the rhetorical dimensions of individual texts, while always keeping in mind the traditional categories. While the chief aims guide the course of an argument, they are also subordinated to rhetorical exigencies. Indeed this can be just as true for the theoretical texts *in which* such definitions appear: they too manipulate the traditional framework, as *de Oratore* demonstrates (cf. Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.6–11). Crassus’ argument in favor of prose rhythm

does not match his rote definition in Book 1. It shares many aspects of Antonius' discussion of deliberative in Book 2 but ultimately goes beyond the list offered there. Thus, even among the theorists of rhetoric, deliberative was a pliable system that lent itself to insufficient discrimination. It would be impractical to squeeze the diversity of evidence into a too stringent framework.

That restrictive habit had, however, a basis in antiquity. Quintilian, for example, hoped to stave off the multiplication of deliberative aims. He rejected *necessitas* ("necessity") but favored *utilitas* and *honestas* (*necessitas* should be a specific case of *utilitas*). He does admit *possibile* ("the possible" – translating the Greek term *dynaton*). Quintilian also canvasses the possibility that pleasure (*iucunditas*, *uoluptas*) should serve as the chief argument in certain cases, such as the building of a theater or the establishment of games. He accepts considerations of pleasure only in conjunction with those of *utilitas* and *honestas*: *neminem adeo solutum luxu puto ut nihil in causa suadendi sequatur praeter uoluptatem* ("I think no one is so mired in luxury as to consider pleasure the sole point of persuasion," 3.8.28). By limiting the categories, Quintilian does not simply repeat a universally accepted schema of the handbooks; he fights the (apparently widespread) tendency to multiply the aims, either by theorists or in the contemporary practices of the declaimers and other orators.

At any rate a speech need not take its cue solely from the manuals or the neat oppositions they tended to produce. Numerous practical examples demonstrate a broad inventiveness in crafting arguments: Cicero's own oratory, the declamations of Seneca the Elder and [Quintilian], as well as the orations inserted by historians such as Livy or Tacitus into their works. In examining the construction of such speeches, it will be better to focus on how the prescriptive scaffolding ultimately gave way to a subtle and effective persuasive structure.

3. The *Dialogus*

The analysis of rhetoric in the *Dialogus* more openly connects deliberative theory with oratorical practice than do the historical works. Consequently, it provides a suitable starting point from which to consider how Tacitus regarded and consequently employed the genre. Dated by most scholars to within a few years of the *Agricola* and the *Germania* (the two other texts of Tacitus' so-called "minor works," *opera minora*), the *Dialogus* considers the past and present states of Roman oratory. The main interlocutors, Aper, Maternus, and Messalla, hold a series of three debates, as each delivers two

declamatory-style speeches. Written within the ancient – and especially Ciceronian – tradition, the *Dialogus* captivatingly documents the socio-cultural influences on imperial oratory.

Yet unlike many of his forerunners, Tacitus avoids explicit articulation of technical matters except in brief spurts, usually in the speeches of Messalla (who readily waxes Ciceronian). Cicero in *de Oratore* had already evinced marked discomfort with the schematic rules and punctilious lists that filled the rhetoricians' arid tomes. He did not forego technical detail altogether but derided anything redolent of artifice or Greekness, even going so far as to parody the handbook style through a playful analysis of the figures of thought and speech (3.202–209; cf. May and Wisse 2001, 287 n. 279). Nearly 150 years later Tacitus would leave Cicero's anxieties behind him, while still borrowing his literary devices, such as Crassus' justification of prose rhythm. Cicero provided an alternative model to crude technical exposition, by embedding a rich example of generic precepts within the arguments of the text itself. Tacitus similarly dresses up rhetorical theory and exposition in carefully crafted declamatory speeches.

That choice of form has not necessarily benefited our understanding of content, for in many of Tacitus' speeches, theoretical substance has been thoroughly displaced or concealed by a practical rendition. Aper's first speech, for example, is a magisterial specimen of deliberative. In detailing the social role of oratory in the imperial period, he structures the argument via traditional deliberative aims. All the speeches in the *Dialogus* contain deliberative elements, to be sure, but as the dialogue progresses they assume a shape less like the deliberative *suasoriae* and more like the (essentially) forensic *controversiae*: an emphasis on persuasion yields to expository analysis of oratory's cultural and political history (cf. Rutledge in this volume).

Aper lays out the terms of his speech in what is traditionally called a *partitio* ("division" of the main points): *quo non aliud in ciuitate nostra uel ad utilitatem fructuosius <uel ad uoluptatem dulcius> uel ad dignitatem amplius uel ad Urbis famam pulchrius uel ad totius imperii atque omnium gentium notitiam illustrius excogitari posset* ("in comparison to which [sc. oratory] nothing can be imagined in our city that bears more utility, <is more delightfully pleasurable>, more liberally dignified, more adorns the renown of the city, or more illustriously heightens regard for our whole empire and all its peoples," 5.4). Detailed elaboration of the points then follows: oratory provides safety (*utilitas*, 5.5), pleasure, (*uoluptas*, 6.1), renown (the triad *fama*, *laus*, and *gloria*, 7.3), offices (7.1–2, essentially *dignitas*), and friendship (*amicitia*, 8.3).

Aper deftly interweaves the arguments so that one point often

cannot be distinguished from another. For example, *uoluptas* and related terms describe the pleasure the orator receives in social connections (6.2–6.3), in skillfully practicing his art (6.4–6.6), as well as in the tenure of office (7). He recapitulates the chief points before embarking on a preemptive refutation of Maternus: *carmina et uersus ... neque dignitatem ullam auctoribus suis conciliant neque utilitates alunt; uoluptatem autem breuem, laudem inanem et infructuosam consequuntur* (“poems and verses garner their authors no *dignitas* nor do they enhance practicalities; they achieve only short-lived pleasure along with hollow and barren praise,” 9.1). The speech is well structured (Luce 1993, 26–28) and all its talking points appear in one or another of the rhetorical manuals.

Adherence to generic expectations, however, has not spared Aper from criticism (Goldberg 1999 summarizes the scholarship’s criticism of Aper’s rhetoric; he defends Aper’s first speech, 227–231, but deals primarily with the *delatores*; cf. Champion 1994). Readers have taken issue with his values: the interest in the personal motivations for the practice of oratory would seem to espouse naked self-service, the greedy utilitarian stance of the ambitious and the corrupt. To emphasize fame and office as he does likewise seems to indicate his relentless self-promotion. Yet, it has been noted, he operates within a Roman audience’s horizon of expectations: “Aper’s concern with the public recognition of status lay at the core of the Roman aristocratic mentality” (Champion 1994, 154). Still, criticism of Aper’s motivations has not abated entirely. It will be worth revisiting Aper’s speech while keeping in mind how Tacitus employs a deliberative framework for it. The scholarship to date has recognized, but not yet fully illuminated, the considerable debt to the rhetorical tradition from which Tacitus has Aper draw throughout. Can attention to deliberative theory and practice help us understand the choices Tacitus has made for Aper?

Aper begins with the aim of usefulness: *si ad utilitatem uitae omnia consilia factaque nostra derigenda sunt* (“if all our counsels and actions should focus the practical advantage in life,” 5.5). The direction seems thoroughly utilitarian, and scholars have questioned the soundness of the rhetorical strategy (e.g., Mayer 2001, 101: “arguably faulty”). However, the conditional *si* is worth pressing for two reasons. More immediately, Aper only suggests the possibility that utility might be the main point to consider in debating one’s future actions. He acknowledges the premises of the statement without necessarily endorsing them, and, of course, Aper quickly moves on to the other points of his argument.

Beyond that, Aper frames the statement as a generally accepted principle rather than just his own opinion. It immediately suggests a

strong and recognizable presence of this idea in the tradition. Would Aper's interlocutors know what he was referring to? Cicero is certainly a good choice (there may be others, cf., e.g., *Rhet. Her.* 3.3), and when we look back to his texts, we encounter forerunners for Aper's hypothesis:

quae omnes [sc. deliberationes] ad utilitatem dirigerentur eorum quibus consilium daremus.

(*de Orat.* 3.141)

All of which [deliberations] aim at the utility of those to whom we give counsel.

est igitur in deliberando finis utilitas, ad quem omnia ... referuntur in consilio dando sententiaque dicenda.

(*Part.* 83)

Therefore utility is the aim in deliberating, to which all things are referred in giving counsel and opinion.

The parallels of language underline the continuity of this problem within the deliberative tradition, as Aper's tentative suggestion alerts readers to different past definitions. Tacitus' rewording of Cicero partly highlights how much the *Dialogus* owes to its predecessors. This nod to past texts is also a programmatic statement about how one rhetorical text self-consciously engages with the others in its tradition. Tacitus chooses, of course, the ideal point in the dialogue for such an engagement: the first sentence of the first speech, the moment at which debate about oratory, rhetoric, and their history finally begins.

Another example from Quintilian deals with this problem more explicitly. He imagines an interlocutor who objects to the need to resort to practical, effective arguments over the stricter tenets of honorability. Quintilian responds to the objection, citing a letter from Cicero to Brutus:

poterat me liberare Cicero, qui ita scribit ad Brutum, praepositis plurimis quae honeste suaderi Caesari possint: "simne bonus vir si haec suadeam?" minime. suasoris enim finis est utilitas eius cui quisque suadet. at recta sunt: quis negat? Sed non est semper rectis in suadendo locus.

(*Inst.* 3.8.42)

Cicero could free me from criticism, who wrote to Brutus, after many propositions had been made which could honorably be put forth to Caesar [i.e., Octavian]: "Should I be a good man if I advise these things?" No. The aim of someone persuading is the utility of that man whom he counsels. "But they're right." Yes, of

course. But there isn't always a place for matters of right in counseling.

Cicero chose to come down on the side of effectiveness, but Quintilian's citation of his letter also reminds us of the longevity of the problem in the tradition. A skilled reader of rhetorical texts was likely to recognize the underlying significance of Aper's question: it implicitly marks out the *Dialogus* as one of many to engage with the contested definitions of deliberative.

As it is, Aper moves on to consider at length arguments that would rightly be classified under the heading of *dignitas*. We can divide his argument into three main points: connections, office, and renown. As noted above, the speech partly subordinates these *loci* to the overarching aim of *uoluptas*. Aper proudly details the acquisition of a large network of dependents, including men of varied age and status who seek out the assistance of the skilled orator. That power endows the orator with an ability to navigate and ultimately to challenge cruder forms of power as well as Rome's most venerated hierarchies. For example, social connections provide a pleasure greater than power and wealth (6.3). The emperor too seeks the friendship of great pleaders (8.3), but precisely because they do not depend on him for their talent. Oratory has likewise brought Aper office (7.1), and he even imagines himself transgressing the limits of the traditional *cursus honorum* ("the progression of offices" or "career"): *mihi supra tribunatus et praeturas et consulatus ascendere uideor* ("I seem to myself to climb beyond the tribunates, praetorships, and consulships," 7.2). Lastly a rhetorical question singles out the fame of the orators: *fama et laus cuius artis cum oratorum gloria comparanda est* ("the report and renown of which art ought to be compared with the orators' glory?" 7.3).

Not only are these values Roman, they also contribute substantially to individual *dignitas*, a term closely connected with *honestas* in the theoretical texts. Aper is unflinching in his ambition, true, but we should be wary of imposing modern conceptions of the public weal and individual honor onto Roman practice. Through officious jargon such as "public service" our politicians constantly distance themselves from the powerful honors they enjoy (whether we believe them is another matter altogether). The Romans had little compunction about formal offices or their attendant fruits. Indeed, the elite avidly pursued the trappings of public distinction.

We might still object to Aper's failure to elaborate in detail the connection between his own *dignitas* and that of the Roman state (cf. Champion 1994, 159: "For Aper, the honor and reputation which words such as *dignitas*, *fama*, and *notitia* entail are confined to a more personal sense"). In section 5.4 (quoted above), Aper did emphasize

how the orator's success benefits the empire and its subjects. He does not belabor the point but has certainly made it – the orator's fame redounds upon the Roman state, beginning in the city and extending to the farthest reaches of the provinces. The brevity of the dialogue and its speeches leaves little room for repetition.

The theme of renown is a complex topic in the *Dialogus* (and a pressing one among Tacitus' contemporaries: Mayer 2001, 9–12 compares the near-obsession with it in the letters of Pliny, Tacitus' contemporary and literary confidant; see also Whitton in this volume). Aper's discussion of fame in the first speech is but one part of a much larger analysis that unfolds across the work. It notably underlies the opening question:

Saepe ex me requiris, Iuste Fabi, cur cum priora saecula tot eminentium oratorum ingeniis gloriaeque floruerint, nostra potissimum aetas deserta et laude eloquentiae orbata uix nomen oratoris retineat.

(*Dial.* 1.1)

Repeatedly, Fabius Iustus, you ask me why, although earlier generations flourished in the glory and talents of so many distinguished orators, our age above all, barren and bereft of the eminence of eloquence, hardly preserves the distinction “orator.”

Aper in his first speech emphasizes fame in such a way as to remind us that rhetorical renown derives from numerous sources. It is on the one hand a subset of the notoriety acquired through office, clients, protection of the provinces – all categories that were equally essential to Cicero's conception of oratory. This topic will reemerge in Maternus' final speech as well, though he addresses the changed venues for practicing oratory at Rome. On the other hand fame is a function of literary reception, a major topic of the second debate: what connection obtains between the evaluation of oratory, the standards we set for it, and the renown of its practitioners? The first debate, by focusing on the renown of the orator and the poet, highlights only one aspect of what will become a major motif within the dialogue.

The incorporation of an argument from Aper's speech into the work's larger design also helps us to understand the most criticized of Aper's terms: *uoluptas*. Even Aper's staunchest defenders have objected on this score: “Cicero uses *uoluptas* as a disgraceful form of pleasure in contrast with the *dignitas* of public service” (Champion 1994, 159–160). Apart from the social benefits, Aper relishes oratory's imaginative elements, the ability to fashion skilled speech (*eloquentia*). By stressing that the successful orator enjoys the fruits of his *ingenium*, Aper offers a motivation for oratory's creative side. Other speakers too

will reiterate the role of pleasure as a catalyst for skilled speech, as when Messalla highlights the term upon arriving at the discussion, just after the first speeches of Aper and Maternus:

me uero ... sermo iste infinita uoluptate adfecisset, atque id ipsum delectat, quod uos, uiri optimi et <optimi> nostrorum temporum oratores, non forensibus tantum negotiis et declamatorio studio ingenia uestra exercetis, sed eius modi etiam disputationes assumitis quae et ingenium alunt et eruditionis ac litterarum iucundissimum oblectamentum cum uobis qui illa disputatis adferunt, tum etiam iis ad quorum aures peruenerint.

(*Dial. 14.3*)

That conversation surely would have given me endless pleasure. And it delights me that you excellent men, the greatest speakers of our day, not only train your talents by forensic activity and declamatory study but that you even take up the sort of discussions which both nourish your talent and bring a most pleasurable enticement of literary culture both to yourselves as debaters and likewise to an audience.

He has added a further element to Aper's initial emphasis, tying pleasure to the education of the orator. Messalla, whom Fantham (1996, 198) memorably dubbed the work's "Young Fogey," has a tendency in his speeches to reiterate Ciceronian doctrine and strict moralizing. It would be strikingly inconsonant (though not impossible) to find him endorsing values that Cicero found suspect. Instead, Tacitus gives *uoluptas* a decidedly positive spin by pressing it into the service of a greater ideal: oratorical education and training.

Furthermore, Aper clearly has tradition on his side (the three following examples are cited above). Quintilian was happy to accept *uoluptas* so long as the orator also could argue utility or honorability. Cicero, of course, used *uoluptas* in *de Oratore*'s most subtle example of deliberative, the justification of prose rhythm. We also should not ignore the distant echo of Anaximenes, who likewise considered pleasure one of the main aims. Certainly, Cicero indicated the potential moral depravity of *uoluptas* in *Partitiones Oratoriae* 90: the orator must often rely on cruder arguments for uncultivated boors (*indoctus* and *agrestis*). Such men, Cicero says, so indulge their pleasure as to disregard the fundamental considerations of honorability and necessity. Aper by contrast does not craft his argument for the voluptuaries whom Cicero scouts: pleasure is not an end but rather stands in the service of a greater principle. Furthermore, Cicero's objections to the immoral habits of such an audience need not extend to the moral character of the speaker. A good orator makes such an argument because a good orator adapts his speech to his audience.

Viewed against the backdrop of the rhetorical corpus, Aper's choice is hardly objectionable. The realities of practice confirm an implicit principle: even an impugnable piece of vocabulary such as *uoluptas* can be brought into the body of persuasive aims, so long as those aims serve the needs of a given speech or literary text.

Still, understanding the organic relationship of *uoluptas* to the *Dialogus* and to the rhetorical tradition may not dispel all reservations (cf., e.g., Fantham 1996, 195; Mayer 2001, 101: "moralists insisted on the part played by integrity (*honestas*)"). Further objections on this score must be addressed, in part because criticism of *uoluptas* is inherently tied to expectations about the use of *honestas*. Aper uses the term *honestas* sparingly. First, as if anticipating the objections of moralists, he qualifies *uoluptas* with the adjective *honesta* (6.2). Here we should be careful to see how Tacitus is perhaps making an effort to define a form of *uoluptas* that is consistent with the social and literary cultures of the imperial period and yet still alert to moral concerns. The phrase may be an oxymoron (Champion 1994, 160 n. 55), but it may just as well indicate awareness of an underlying ambiguity. An author could suggest a negative picture of *uoluptas* (as Cicero often did), could make it a fairly neutral term (as Cicero also did in the *Pro Archia*, where he contrasts it with similar but more socially acceptable ideas such as *delectare*, *oblectare*, *uenustas*, and the like), or could in turn emphasize the positive traits (as when *de Oratore* champions the pleasure of prose rhythm; there the term wants no justification). This slipperiness confounds the ascription of *uoluptas* to an abstract category that is necessarily good or bad. Context and its function within an argument ultimately determine the moral coloring.

Still we may be wrong in expecting Aper to address *honestas* at length. Again, the deliberative tradition helps us to understand the matter. An orator had no obligation to all the deliberative aims. Selectivity was paramount, as Quintilian tells us: *quas partes non omnes in omnem cadere suasoriam manifestius est quam ut docendum sit* ("and the fact that not all these parts will make their way into every persuasive speech is more self-evident than needs demonstration," 3.8.2). Orators make only the arguments that most help a case, avoiding rote repetition of the handbook categories. To insist on *honestas* is to impose a requirement foreign to rhetorical prescription and oratorical practice alike (Hermogenes, *On Issues* 78 emphatically argues this point).

Even so Aper's seeming aversion to *honestas* may be more a result of emphasis and phrasing than of any actual failure to draw on that category. In a preemptive refutation of Maternus, he disclaims forensic quietism as an honorable position (10.5, using *honestum*). *Honestas*, admittedly, does not have a prominent place in the speech, but it is

addressed none the less. To focus on a single term ignores how much authors (and Cicero in particular) promoted *dignitas* and related vocabulary as partial equivalents. A large group of values (honor, renown, friendship, etc.) have a share in *honestas* (as well as *utilitas*). In promoting them an orator also makes the case for *honestas*. For the speaker in need of reasons more concrete than moral abstractions, *dignitas* essentially was *honestas*. In looking back on Aper's speech, then, we can say that its majority emphasizes values and benefits with at least some connection to *honestas*.

A final point concludes the examination of Aper's arguments. Tacitus has shaped them upon a Ciceronian last (Mayer 2001 notes numerous parallel passages). Through an array of intertextual references to Cicero's *de Oratore*, Aper repeats many of the social motivations for oratory that Cicero had put into the mouths of his own interlocutors. This essay cannot adequately discuss Tacitus' reworking of Cicero; the relationship is complex, the allusions numerous. The parallels do, however, demonstrate a shared sympathy for the socio-political relevance of the oratorical craft. The grand commonality between Book 1 of *de Oratore* and the first debate in the *Dialogus* is that a strong justification of oratory in social terms could be made in Cicero's day and in Tacitus', however much oratory's civic role may have followed innovative (and perhaps more restricted) avenues.

In many respects this changed course belonged to deliberative oratory, which still had a place in Roman society though its venues and political context had changed considerably since the age of Cicero. The *Dialogus* and *Annals* remind us that persuasive speeches still took place in the Senate. Quintilian makes deliberative a mainstay of the rhetorical program. When thinking of deliberative and the extant oratorical corpus (which must invariably begin with the texts of Cicero), we tend to think of the *contio*, persuasive speech before the Roman people. Our literary record, including the *Dialogus*, suggests that this specific form, so practiced and prized by Cicero, had seen its heyday in the republic (though again, Quintilian would not write it off). At the same time we should consider the dangers and limitations of accepting Cicero's practices as the sole possibilities for persuasion in the Roman world (cf. Levene 2005). A different question may be in order: given that theorists still emphasized deliberative practice, what spurred them to maintain the genre as a central part of Roman rhetorical culture? For a partial answer we can turn to Tacitus' *Annals*.

4. The *Annals*

The observations made thus far about the *Dialogus* can provide some guidance into the workings of deliberative in the *Annals*. This, the last of his works, documents the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero (many sections are lost). The lines of investigation here will parallel those of the *Dialogus* in two main areas. How does Tacitus draw on deliberative's flexibility in crafting argument for the *Annals*, and how do the rhetorical elements shape our understanding of the work's larger design? The conclusion will then address the similar manipulation of deliberative categories in the *Dialogus* and *Annals* and how this connection might allow each to be brought to bear on interpretation of the other.

Approaches to Roman rhetoric have undergone (at least) two significant changes in recent decades. First, scholars have lavished attention on rhetorical practice after Cicero, with keen scrutiny of declamation's socio-cultural significance. How, for example, does declamation serve to acculturate the Roman elite, that is, to teach young Romans across the empire to become Roman men (cf., e.g., Kaster 1998; Gunderson 2003)? Second, scholars of Roman historiography have expended considerable effort in assessing that genre's rhetorical underpinnings. The relationship between the handling of material in histories and the theoretical framework that can explain the historians' handiwork is still contested (see Guide to Further Reading at the end of this chapter). If we can no longer dismiss the rhetorical basis of ancient historiography, it is worth considering how much the declaimers' methods and especially Tacitus' *Dialogus* shed light on Tacitus' rhetorical habits.

The modern declamatory style informed Tacitus' work: speakers of the imperial era relished irony and paradox, the well-placed *sententia* (aphorism) was a favorite technique, and Tacitus often capped a piece of persuasion with this rhetorical flourish (cf. Sinclair 1995). These techniques emerge, for example, in the account of the Pannonian uprising. As Drusus drags his heels in responding to the demands of the disaffected legionaries, Tacitus purports to relate the (unidentified) clamor issuing from the crowd:

cur uenisset neque augendis militum stipendiis neque adleuandis laboribus, denique nulla bene faciendi licentia? at hercule uerbera et necem cunctis permitti. Tiberium olim nomine Augusti desideria legionum frustrari solitum: easdem artis Drusum rettulisse. numquamne ad se nisi filios familiarum uenturos? nouum id plane quod imperator sola militis commoda ad senatum reiciat. eundem ergo senatum consulendum quotiens supplicia aut proelia indicantur: an praemia sub dominis, poenas sine arbitro esse?

Why had he come, neither to increase the soldiers' wages nor alleviate their toils, in fact without a license to do any good at all? Yes, as Hercules was their witness, everyone had permission when it came to beatings and execution! Tiberius had once been accustomed to frustrate the legions' requirements with Augustus' name; Drusus had brought back the same techniques: would they never have any visitors except family sons? It was obviously a novelty that the Commander should refer only the benefits of soldiers to the Senate: was the same Senate therefore to be consulted each time reprisals or battles were declared? Or was it the case that prizes depended on their masters but punishments demanded no adjudicators?¹

Anonymity and the compressed, complex style remind us that Tacitus has invented the speech (as he does others), which could have found a warm reception in the declaimers' halls.

The similarities, however, extend beyond stylistic details. Declamation served the dual ends of civic engagement and literary achievement in Rome's culture of public performance. In this setting declamation was a potent force in socializing the Roman elite. What specifically made deliberative so attractive, especially at a point in history when by many accounts the scope of public oratory in the political arena had shrunk? The genre lent itself to considerations of morality and usefulness. At the same time it was hard to fix absolute values to any of the *fines* – we simply cannot say that *utilitas* has no part in morality or that *honestas* must always be an exclusively ethical category. There was always a spectrum of associations. In some sense the most significant aspect of that tension is its irresolvable nature: *certatur, utrum honestati potius an utilitati consulendum sit* ("There is debate about whether we ought to have greater consideration for honorability or utility," Antonius in *de Oratore*, cited above). The open-endedness meant that deliberative oratory could perform considerable cultural work. Through the conventions and vocabulary of deliberative, imperial authors – foremost among them Tacitus – frame and explore the problems of moral agency at considerable depth.

This moral potential is at home in history, as one of Tacitus' most famous digressions reminds us: *haec conquiri tradique in rem fuerit, quia pauci prudentia honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt, plures aliorum euentis docentur* ("it will be apposite for these matters to have been assembled and transmitted, because few men have the proficiency to distinguish the honorable from the baser, or the useful from the harmful, whereas the majority are taught by what happens to

others,” *Ann.* 4.33.2). Tacitus describes the value of his project in deliberative terms – but without creating a hierarchy: both the honorable and the useful help to direct an audience’s moral compass. Now there might seem to be a fundamental difference in the function of history and deliberative oratory: the strict definition of deliberative as “forward looking” imperfectly describes its workings in history, which drew on *exempla* from the past as a resource for present and future generations. Yet Quintilian keenly observed that “the deliberative art, also called the *suasoria*, inquires into the past as well when consulting about the future” (*ars deliberatiua, quae eadem suasoria dicitur, de tempore futuro consultans quaerit etiam de praeterito*, *Inst.* 3.8.6). Declamatory culture altered a sense of what deliberative was good for. Its function came into line with the exemplary function of history: not only to review the past, but to relive its moral complexities through argument and presentation, in order then to influence future action.

Over and again in the *Annals*, we encounter figures who evaluate their situation as a conflict of utility and honorability. This framework also shapes the broader narrative portrayal of individuals and situations. In Book 3, when the aediles report that the laws on expenditure were being flaunted, the Senate refers the matter to Tiberius. His response, the longest direct “speech” by Tiberius, contains one of the most intricate and fascinating arguments in the *Annals* (Woodman and Martin 1996 detail the complexities of the passage). Tiberius would often consider whether to restrain lavish expenditure on food (*luxus mensae*, “luxuriance of the table”):

sed Tiberius saepe apud se pensitato an coerceri tam profusae cupidines possent, num coercitio plus damni in rem publicam ferret, quam indecorum adrectare quod non obtineret uel retentum ignominiam et infamiam uirorum inlustrium posceret, postremo litteras ad senatum composuit quarum sententia in hunc modum fuit ...

(*Ann.* 3.52.3)

But Tiberius – having often pondered to himself whether such surging desires could be confined, whether their confinement would inflict a greater loss on the state, and how undignified it would be to handle something which he could not attain or which, if sustained, would entail ignominy and infamy for illustrious men – finally composed a letter to the Senate, in which his proposal was in this manner ...

Rhetorical structuring is partly buried in the complexities of thought, but Tacitus lays out the problem in a way that looks remarkably like a topic we might find in a declamation or dialogue.

That Tiberius often (*saepe*) considered the issue hints at the “*saepe*” motif with which a speaker would often begin a dialogue (e.g., Cicero’s *Orator* and Tacitus’ *Dialogus*). Similarly, the declaimers would revisit again and again their favored topics. Tiberius’ tripartite division seems strikingly like the introduction to a set piece (see on *partitio* above and Woodman and Martin 1996, 382 on the declamatory *diuisio*). Tiberius argues three points: (1) the possible (*possent*), (2) utility (*damnum* – the potential detriment to the state), (3) honorability (three negative terms: *indecorus*, *ignominia*, *infamia*). This seems like a set piece, but rather than consider just the speech as a sophisticated model of deliberative – which it undoubtedly is – the full narrative is worth tracing out. For, ultimately, the opposition of *utilitas* to *honestas* encroaches on the logic of the entire passage, including Tacitus’ subsequent digression on history. The deliberative categories resurface in the details of the letter:

ceteris forsitan in rebus, patres conscripti, magis expediat me coram interrogari et dicere quid e re publica censeam: in hac relatione subtrahi oculos meos melius fuit, ne, denotantibus uobis ora ac metum singulorum qui pudendi luxus arguerentur, ipse etiam uiderem eos ac uelut deprenderem. quod si mecum ante uiri strenui, aediles, consilium habuissent, nescio an suasurus fuerim omittere potius praeualida et adulta uitia quam hoc adsequi, ut palam fieret quibus flagitiis impares essemus.

(Ann. 3.53.1–2)

In perhaps all other matters, conscript fathers, it would be more expedient if I were present to be questioned and to say what I recommend in the interest of the state; but on this motion it is better that my eyes be withdrawn, lest, as you mark the dread on the faces of those individuals who deserve criticism for their shameful luxuriousness, I myself should see them too and (as it were) apprehend them. Yet if those energetic men, the aediles, had had a consultation with me beforehand, I would probably have urged them to ignore rampant and mature vices rather than pursue a course which revealed the outrages for which we were no match.

Expediat/expeditum (“what is expedient or useful”) frequently stands in for *utilitas*; *honestas* comes through in Tiberius’ refusal to expose the shameful practices of certain senators (thereby preserving their honor); the strongest point comes last, the impossibility of fighting excess (*quibus flagitiis impares essemus*). Tiberius weighs his own motivations in even addressing the issue: *mihi autem neque honestum silere neque proloqui expeditum* (“however, it is neither honorable to keep silent nor expeditious to speak out,” 3.53.3). He

concludes along the same lines by astutely noting the potential effects of pursuing reform:

si quis ex magistratibus tantam industriam ac seueritatem pollicetur ut ire obviam queat, hunc ego et laudo et exonerari laborum meorum partem fateor: sin accusare uitia uolunt, dein, cum gloriam eius rei adepti sunt, simultates faciunt ac mihi relinquunt, credite, patres conscripti, me quoque non esse offensionum audium; quas cum grauis et plerumque iniquas pro re publica suscipiam, inanis et inritas neque mihi aut uobis usui futuras iure deprecor.

(*Ann.* 3.54.5–6)

[I]f any of the magistrates guarantees such industriousness and strictness that he is able to confront the issue, I both praise him and acknowledge that he is disburdening part of my labors. If, on the other hand, they want merely to accuse vices and later, when they have acquired the glory for that, they create feuds which they leave to me, then believe me, conscript fathers, I too am not greedy for affronts to be leveled at me. Although I accept the risk of them, despite their severity and frequent unfairness, for the good of the state, I rightly decline those which are unavailing and unprofitable, likely to be of no use to myself or you.

Of course, the question of possibility ultimately settles the matter. Reform is not possible, but even if it were it could lead only to useless (*neque usui*) strife. Tiberius could have focused exclusively on that single point, since ancient authors agreed that necessity or possibility always trumped the deliberative aims (arguing ethics was futile when an action was dictated by necessity or simply impossible). Instead, Tacitus spends considerable time evaluating the larger problem in ethical terms, thereby revealing numerous details about different actors in the narrative.

Tiberius faults the aediles initially for their superficial understanding of immorality. In the digression that follows, Tacitus implicitly confirms his analysis by suggesting that broader forces rather than immediate intervention would ultimately determine the matter: either the good influence of provincial austerity, emulation of the restraint of the later Flavian emperor, Vespasian, or the possibility that morals have a kind of life cycle. Tacitus allows Tiberius along the way to make a point that seems to subordinate honorability (fame) to utility: the aediles seek out notoriety for their moral stance, but without consideration of the political strife that would ensue (cf. *Ann.* 16.30.1, where Soranus is maliciously accused of managing Asia with greater regard for his own renown than for the public good). Deliberative becomes a substitute for narrative description, revealing

political machination and the ethical motivations of multiple protagonists in a single scenario.

Beyond this narrative function Tacitus will, as he does elsewhere, tie the categories of deliberative into reflections on his own project as an author of history. He follows up Tiberius' letter with a lengthy digression on the present day's potential to rival the past (the famed *nec omnia apud priores meliora*). Readers have noted how designedly Tiberius' letter anticipates the remarks on acquiring fame in different ages through honorable action (cf. Woodman and Martin 1996, 378: "though presented in the form of an excursus, [it] seems to be the 'real' destination of his narrative"). Tacitus' dense conclusion aligns the moral and creative impulses of historiography with honorability: *nec omnia apud priores meliora, sed nostra quoque aetas multa laudis at artium imitanda posteris tulit. uerum haec nobis in maiores certamina ex honesto manebant* ("Nor was everything better in the time of our forebears, but our age too has produced many an instance of excellence in the arts which deserves to be imitated by posterity. Whether or not this happens, however, may these be the contests of ours with our ancestors which will enjoy an honorable survival," 3.55.5). The deliberative framework shapes the disquisition on moral change and on the function of history to transmit moral (and ultimately artistic) fame.

During the later Neronian books of the *Annals* deliberative becomes a mainstay for evaluating individual ethical dilemmas in the face of the emperor's increasing tyranny. Throughout the "catalogue of suicides" at the end of our extant text, Tacitus replays the same scenario over and again: individuals seek *gloria* and assert *libertas* ("freedom") through suicide, as they weigh those goals against the practical consequences – would living longer be worthwhile, how would death affect one's heirs? In the suicide of Thrasea Paetus, the final extant *exemplum* of the work, deliberative terms again infuse the entire narrative context. Thrasea, a Stoic who criticized many of Nero's actions, is harshly attacked in the Senate by Capito Cossutianus with the help of Eprius Marcellus. It becomes clear that the Senate will probably condemn him, largely at the instigation of the now reckless and sanguinary emperor. Tacitus then purports to recount Thrasea's conversations with his confidants. One group counsels him to take a stand that offers the greatest glory: to defend himself boldly before the Senate (16.25). The second group urges a more practical line: glory can still be his through honorable suicide; and death by his own hand will aid his wife, daughter, and other connections (16.26 – the wills of those who took their own life were usually honored, whereas the property of the condemned was typically forfeit to the state). A possible route to salvation comes from Rusticus Arulenus,

who as tribune offers to intervene. Thrasea dissuades him from that path, although it would be the most immediately honorable for the young tribune. The prospect of a successful career, with its attendant honors, should outweigh all other considerations. (It is instructive to compare Aristotle's attempt to define deliberative against epideictic. A speaker of epideictic, according to Aristotle, would praise Achilles for choosing to help Patroclus, because Achilles thereby gained honor even though he otherwise would have lived [i.e., Achilles sacrificed utility to honor]. A speaker of deliberative, however, ought never to abandon utility; Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1359a = 1.3.6.)

Tacitus' account of Thrasea not only posits a basic conflict between *honestas* and *utilitas* – what should Thrasea do and in turn urge others to do? Yet those parameters also define a larger scenario, no longer in the form of a deliberative speech but still encapsulating all the intellectual tensions required to evaluate competing possibilities. One figure embraces the more practical route toward *honestas*; one bends his will to *utilitas*; both choose what most befits the circumstances. The resolution of that conflict serves an acculturative purpose, to instill in others the habits of thought through which to explore moral action.

The final death scene will provide Tacitus with yet another brief opportunity to consider the role of *exempla* in the production of history, though he voices those reflections through Thrasea Paetus. Not surprisingly, the deliberative framework extends even to this final moment. With blood spilling from his veins, Thrasea calls over the young quaestor charged with delivering the Senate's condemnation: *libamus ... Ioui liberatori. specta, iuuenis; et omen quidem dii prohibeant, ceterum in ea tempora natus es quibus firmare animum expediat constantibus exemplis* ("We are making a libation to Jupiter the Liberator. Look, young man! May the gods avert the omen, of course, but you have been born into times when it is expedient [*expediat*] to strengthen the spirit with steadfast examples," *Ann.* 16.35.1). History ultimately overcomes the tension between honorability and utility by uniting both terms in its portrayal of exemplary individuals: useful models of honorable action.

5. Conclusions

Like the skilled orator that he was, Tacitus deftly manipulates the diversity and complexity of the deliberative system. A tendency to separate the *Dialogus* from the *Annals* in discussions of "Tacitus" has often issued from widespread belief that the *Dialogus* condemns

modern oratory. That interpretation stems largely from the long-standing condemnation of Aper's (putatively boorish) utilitarian approach and from his penchant for contemporary oratory. As a result the *Dialogus* would seem to be the last place to turn to uncover Tacitus' own rhetorical values: how could a dialogue denouncing oratory illuminate Tacitus' employment of it? The moral lines, however, have been drawn too sharply, and a contextualization of Aper's deliberative technique within the history of rhetoric shows how Tacitus has aligned him with traditional practice in antiquity. Examination of the *Annals*, furthermore, demonstrates considerable common ground in Tacitus' manipulation of deliberative. Not only in matters of style, but also in the discovery and composition of argumentative patterns does the *Dialogus* provide us a glimpse of Tacitus' rhetorical strategies.

As modern scholarship refines its opinions of the *Dialogus* in other respects, there is an opportunity to recognize further commonalities across Tacitus' oeuvre. The *Dialogus* ought to become an essential part of the equation. Despite all its complexities as a text, the dialogue reflects Tacitus' conception of what oratory was and ought to be. The opportunity is considerable, for the *Dialogus* is the sole Latin text on rhetoric by a significant author of Roman history (the Greek writings of Dionysius of Halicarnassus might serve as a useful comparison). Still the rhetorical turn in the study of Roman historians has yet to make peace with the Tacitus of the *Dialogus*. Modern readers once honored it as Tacitus' "golden booklet" (*aureum libellum*). Perhaps we need also to be persuaded of its utility.

NOTE

1. Translations of the *Annals* are from Woodman (2004).

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Further details on the deliberative system can best be found by looking at the ancient rhetorical texts discussed in this essay. Useful modern surveys are in Martin (1974, 167–176, in German), Luce (1993), Levene (1999), as well as the following (German) articles in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* (Ueding et al. 1992–2010): *Beratungsrede*, *honestum*, *utile*, and *Zweck/Zweckmäßigkeit*. Lausberg (1998) is an accessible overview (in English) of the rhetorical system.

Morstein-Marx (2004) surveys public speech of the republican

period, with a focus on its importance to Roman elite culture. To the best of my knowledge, no survey of deliberative in the rhetorical culture of the imperial period exists. Bonner (1949) surveys Roman declamation, though an up-to-date overview of the topic in the Roman world remains a considerable desideratum in the scholarship. Gunderson (2000, 2003) includes new approaches to the treatment of declamation along socio-cultural lines.

Feldherr (2009) provides a general, recent survey of Roman historiography. On the still contentious problem of rhetoric in historiography, see especially the more theoretically oriented chapters 1–3 and 12–14. O’Gorman (2000) discusses the problematic rhetoric of the *Annals* and contains useful bibliography. Woodman (2004) is a careful translation with notes. For the *Dialogus* Mayer (2001) is the standard commentary for students with Latin. Champion (1994) and Goldberg (1999) offer careful counter-models to the scholarship’s tendency to discount Aper. Levene (2004) and Syson (2009) explore new avenues of analysis for the *Dialogus* as a sophisticated piece of literature. A comprehensive study of the work is wanting.

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*Tacitus' Senatorial Embassies of 69 CE*¹

Kathryn Williams

Sending and receiving embassies was one of the most firmly established and well-recognized responsibilities of the Roman Senate during the republic (Polybius, *Hist.* 6.13.6–7; Lintott 1999, 19–20). As the state's primary body of power, the Senate sent out groups of its members to negotiate with foreign powers and was the main audience for envoys who came to Rome. Quintus Fabius Maximus' embassy to Carthage, where he dramatically dropped the fold of his toga as a declaration of war (Livy 21.18), is certainly memorable, as is that of the three Athenian envoys, the philosophers Carneades, Diogenes, and Critolaus, who addressed the Senate in 155 BCE (Polybius 33.2 fr.). In both situations the Senate's participation in negotiation was evident. Conversion from republic to principate led, however, to a dramatic change in the Senate's role in foreign policy. From the time of Augustus, the emperor was Rome's chief representative in foreign diplomacy. Although there are some recorded instances where foreign envoys presented their cases before the Senate (e.g., *Ann.* 3.60–63; Millar 1977, 346–347; Millar 1982, 4; Mattern 1999, 9 n. 22) – sometimes for no other reason than to offer the appearance of the Senate's involvement in foreign affairs (Dio 52.31.1; Gillett 2003, 18), it was far more common for the emperor himself to receive the foreign embassies (although see Eck 2009, 203–206 on foreign envoys to provincial governors). Augustus certainly boasts in his *Res Gestae* about receiving emissaries from the kings of India, Scythia, and Media, among many others (31–33), and illustrates his preeminence in negotiating with the Parthians to retrieve the standards lost in 53 BCE and to establish friendly relations (*Parthos trium exercitum Romanorum spolia et signa re[ddere] mihi supplicesque amicitiam populi Romani petere coegi*, “I compelled the Parthians to return the war spoils and standards of three Roman armies to me and as suppliants to request the friendship of the Roman people,” *RGDA* 29). If we can rely on the

evidence in *Excerpta de legationibus* (ed. de Boor 1903), there were always more foreign embassies coming to Rome (Pt. 2: *gentium ad Romanos*, 371 pages) than Roman ones going to foreign states (Pt. 1: *Romanorum ad gentes*, 227 pages; also Kehne 2005, 351, s.v. *legatio*), and this was particularly true in the imperial age. As a consequence, once the emperor began directing negotiations abroad, the Senate had virtually no opportunity to send embassies of its own members to foreign states, even though that had been one of its customary duties during the republic. “In the Empire ... no trace of this function can be found at all” (Millar 1988, 367–368). Indeed, any embassies sent out from the Senate during the principate typically went to no one other than the emperor himself or to members of his family (Talbert 1984, 411).

There was one situation, however, where this was not the case. When the emperor’s own position was threatened by civil war he would sometimes try to confront the challenge by sending out senatorial embassies to the rebellious legions and their generals. “Once a civil war began it was usually pursued with the same aggression and combination of force and diplomacy as a foreign war” (Goldsworthy 2007, 121). Unlike foreign wars, however, the role of the senatorial delegation in these circumstances became critical primarily not for what the senators might say or do, but for what they theoretically represented: constitutional support for the presiding *princeps*. The year of the four emperors with its continuous civil wars saw a particularly rich number of such senatorial embassies. Tacitus has provided unique accounts of three embassies sent to mutinous legions during the reigns of each of the emperors overthrown in 69: during those of Galba (*Hist.* 1.19.2) and Otho (1.74.2) to the legions supporting Vitellius and during the reign of Vitellius (3.80–81) to troops supporting Vespasian. Since Tacitus, Suetonius, Plutarch, and Dio all seem to have relied upon a common source for some of their accounts of the year 69 (Syme 1958, 674–676; Sage 1990, 893–894; Damon 2003, 291–302), it is an especially instructive year for Tacitean studies. “By careful comparison among the four one is able to see more clearly here than anywhere else in T[acitus]’ historical work the choices he makes in the selection, arrangement, and presentation of his material” (Damon 2003, 24). Only Tacitus mentions Galba’s delegation. Tacitus and Suetonius (*Otho* 8) comment specifically on the second delegation, although Dio (64.10.1) and Plutarch (*Otho* 4.2) do refer to private correspondence between Otho and Vitellius. Tacitus, Suetonius (*Vit.* 16), and Dio (65.18.3–19.1) variously discuss Vitellius’ last senatorial embassy before Vespasian finally secured power. All three embassies occurred near the ends of these emperors’ lives. None had any success or even any obvious impact on historical

events. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider why Tacitus has gone into such detail with each embassy. Evidently, for Tacitus the significance of the episodes extends far beyond the events of the embassies themselves. Since foreign policy and military matters were two of the most important official functions of the republican Senate over which the *princeps* took control (Talbert 1984, 488), Tacitus' senatorial embassies to rebellious legions of the Roman army serve as a particularly enlightening motif in his *Histories* for exposing shifting political and military dynamics of the empire and new imperial diplomatic procedures.

1. *Histories* 1.19.2

Reports of the revolt of legions in Upper Germany during the first days of 69 convinced Galba to adopt Piso on January 10. Shortly afterwards the Roman Senate resolved to send an embassy to the rebellious legions. The deaths of Galba and Piso five days later prompted Otho to recall Galba's delegation and send out a new one. Tacitus records both of these embassies in Book 1 of his *Histories*. The historian recounts Galba's delegation in a paragraph filled with unexpected detail:

crebrioribus in dies Germanicae defectionis nuntiis et facili ciuitate ad accipienda credendaque omnia noua, cum tristia sunt, censuerant patres mittendos ad Germanicum exercitum legatos. agitatum secreto, num et Piso proficisceretur, maiore praetextu, illi auctoritatem senatus, hic dignationem Caesaris laturus. placebat et Laconem praetorii praefectum simul mitti: is consilio intercessit. legati quoque (nam senatus electionem Galbae permiserat) foeda inconstantia nominati excusati substituti, ambitu remanendi aut eundi, ut quemque metus uel spes impulerat.

(*Hist.* 1.19.2)

With more numerous announcements daily of the German defection and with the citizenry ready to receive and believe all news when it is grim, the senators had resolved that envoys should be sent to the German army. There was discussion in private as to whether or not Piso also should go, in order to present a more splendid impression – they [the senators] would bring the authority of the Senate, he [Piso] the prestige of Caesar. There was a proposal that the praetorian prefect Laco also should be sent at the same time. He vetoed the plan. The envoys also

(for the Senate had entrusted the selection to Galba) with contemptible vacillation were named, excused, substituted, based upon their canvassing for staying or going, as fear or hope compelled each one.

Tacitus begins his narrative by dramatically emphasizing the threatening situation (*crebrioribus in dies Germanicae defectionis nuntiis*), adding urgency to the peril with a gnomic statement about the Roman citizenry's eager acceptance of negative reports (*facili ciuitate ad accipienda credendaque omnia noua, cum tristia sunt*). He then shifts to the language of diplomacy: *censuerant patres mittendos ... legatos* (cf. Caes., *Gal.* 1.35: *legatos cum his mandatis mittit*, "he sends envoys with these orders"; *RGDA* 31: *legationes saepe missae sunt*, "embassies were often sent"; see also Eilers 2009, 1). Tacitus gives the impression initially that the Senate is in control since they had resolved to send the delegation (*censuerant patres*). This notion is immediately undermined, however, when the reader learns that a secret meeting (*agitatum secreto*) followed the Senate's resolution, and at that private meeting Galba and his *consilium* (Heubner 1963, 57; Sage 1990, 899) discussed other possible representatives to go along with the senators. The notion of sending personal agents to represent the emperor very likely grew out of the republican practice of selecting politically prominent and capable orators to represent the Senate in its diplomatic efforts. Men with acknowledged *dignitas* added honor and respect both to the delegation itself and to the delegation's recipients (e.g., Livy 2.15.1: *honoratissimus quisque ex patribus*, "all the most highly regarded of our senators"). This sign of respect coupled with an ability to speak persuasively (*orator* was an early Latin term for "envoy"; cf. Livy 1.15.5; *OLD* 1; Linderski 1995, 457) were two powerful tools of negotiation. By 69, however, over a hundred years had passed since the Senate had frequently ventured on diplomatic missions. Consequently, none of its members was likely to be particularly well versed in diplomatic negotiations. Emergence of empire also meant that some who were personally close to the emperor could provide as much, if not more, honor to the embassy and its recipients than could individual senators. Therefore, it is not surprising that Galba and his council considered sending Piso along with the senators. For here, as Tacitus notes, the newly proclaimed heir could contribute *dignatio Caesaris*. The senators would provide *auctoritas senatus*. The distinction that Tacitus makes is noteworthy (see Lendon 1997, 274–275). When it comes to imperial diplomacy, *dignatio Caesaris* is a critical component, yet the *auctoritas senatus* may still be valid and weighty as a mark of commanding authority when the recipient of the embassy is a usurper. The presence of senators would tacitly declare the legitimacy of Galba's imperial power, while

the presence of Piso would be a bold reminder of the emperor in Rome and his chosen successor. To remind Vitellius of the emperor's military authority, Galba might give additional force to his embassy by sending his praetorian prefect, and this too his advisors proposed (*placebat et Laconem praetorii praefectum simul mitti*). Clearly, in spite of Galba's effort to highlight the support of the Senate, he and his advisors were interested in having some imperial representatives accompany them. The problem for Galba, however, was that he did not have sufficient *auctoritas* of his own to persuade his chosen representatives to undertake the mission.

That Galba wanted senators, his imperial heir, and his praetorian prefect – three reflections of his own position of power – to represent him is far less remarkable than what Tacitus records next: *is [Laco] consilio intercessit*. Laco rejected the decision. The very idea of a praetorian prefect refusing an assignment from his emperor would surely have been unsettling for everyone concerned with imperial hierarchy. “[T]o fill the post of Praetorian prefect ... an emperor sought to appoint a man whose friendship and loyalty could be trusted, who had a general competence, who could command the respect of the guardsmen, and who was willing to serve the emperor energetically and help in the day to day matters of administration and government” (Campbell 1984, 116). Indeed, nothing short of Laco's refusal could illustrate so clearly Galba's inability to lead – nothing, of course, until the reader gets to Tacitus' next sentence and learns how ineptly Galba handles the selection of senators for the delegation: *legati quoque ... foeda inconstantia nominati excusati substituti, ambitu remanendi aut eundi, ut quemque metus uel spes impulerat*. Galba vacillates as senators plead their cases to participate in the embassy or not. Indecisiveness over the selection of senators to send to the German legions brings Galba's *mobilitas ingenii* (1.7.2) to the surface again, but Galba may also have been irresolute because it made no difference to him which senators actually went. To affirm his authority, he needed simply to display the support of the Senate by the presence of its members in an official embassy; any genuine negotiating with the German legion, however, would have been handled primarily by his own selected agents. It is most revealing of Galba's inability to rule that neither of his own representatives accompanied the senators.

Although Galba does not appear as a strong leader here, Tacitus does not reserve all his criticism for him. Senators, driven by fear or hope, plead with the emperor to be dismissed from this assignment or be allowed to go. Tacitus gives no indication that their concerns are anything other than purely personal; there is no hint of senators striving to represent their assembly as a whole. In fact, they do not

seem to sense any obligation to assume their public duty. Instead they act shamefully by forsaking their responsibility to name their own delegates: *nam senatus electionem Galbae permiserat*. This seemingly matter-of-fact remark is damning in its simplicity: the Senate has handed over one of its most important functions to the emperor at the very moment when the emperor was extremely vulnerable and they might have tried to assume greater power. By initially granting the Senate a leading role (*censuerant patres*), Tacitus highlights even more emphatically the opportunity they squandered.

The political significance of this concession of power becomes absolutely clear only in Book 4.6–8 where Tacitus mentions the Senate's inaugural delegation to Vespasian. There, Tacitus spells out the importance of the Senate's choosing its own members to send. The scene is a debate in the Senate between the elder Helvidius Priscus and Eprius Marcellus. During the reign of Galba, Helvidius had brought charges against Marcellus for his role as a *delator* in the death of Thrasea Paetus. Although Helvidius eventually abandoned the prosecution, his opposition toward Marcellus remained and resurfaced at this Senate meeting where imperial power was voted to Vespasian. Along with this vote came the decision to send an embassy to Vespasian (*eo senatus die, quo de imperio Vespasiani censebant, placuerat mitti ad principem legatos*, "on this day on which the Senate voted imperial power for Vespasian, it had been resolved that envoys be sent to the *princeps*," 4.6.3). For the next two chapters (4.7–8) Tacitus describes in detail the debate between Helvidius and Marcellus over the composition of the delegation. This debate goes to the very heart of the relationship between the Senate and emperor. Helvidius argues that it would serve the state best if the senators who went to meet the new emperor were men regarded for their integrity (*innocentissimos*, 4.7.2). Only senators of this sort who gained an audience with the emperor could remind Vespasian of the Senate's authority. "[T]he envoys, if elected, not chosen by lot, would constitute a very powerful group which the new emperor must reckon with, now and afterwards. ... The ultimate aim of Helvidius' motion is, accordingly, to strengthen the authority of the senate in relation to the new princeps" (Pigoñ 1992, 236). This attempt by Helvidius is a bold proposal and one that highlights the significance of the composition of any embassy. Nonetheless, Helvidius' Senate ultimately abandoned the effort. They opted instead to support Marcellus who argued that although being selected would indicate prominence, not being chosen would reveal just the opposite: "It was Marcellus' own feeling of shame," writes Tacitus, "which was rousing his ardor, lest he be considered irrelevant when others were chosen" (*Marcelli studium proprius rubor excitabat, ne aliis electis posthabitus crederetur*, 4.7.1). Eprius Marcellus represents

the concerns of the individual senators here rather than any concern for the Senate's power. An embassy selected by members of the Senate would indicate that the Senate was attempting to regain some authority and influence with the new emperor, to help shape his *consilium* (Malitz 1985, 235), an audacious challenge that Marcellus himself soon argues would be too threatening for any emperor (4.8.4). An embassy chosen by lot – or by the emperor, as in the case of *Histories* 1.19.2 – illustrated the Senate's acquiescence to limited power and the senators' greater concern with their own personal preservation. With the Senate's decision to heed Marcellus and choose the envoys by lot, the "subordinate position of the Senate with respect to the emperor is clearly expressed as well as the futility of any real opposition" (Sage 1990, 941; see also Birley 1962, 198). Tacitus describes this debate on the composition of the senatorial embassy in great detail throughout these chapters in Book 4. He presents both senators' arguments, primarily in terms of the decision's effects on the relations between the Senate and the emperor. The degree of attention highlights the importance of this topic in the *Histories* and compels the reader to acknowledge the profound importance all the participants in embassies described in the work have on Tacitus' historiography.

Tacitus could have omitted any mention of the Senate's embassy from his account in Book 1 of the last days of Galba, just as the other major historians and biographers of his time did. Ultimately, Piso did not go, nor did Laco, and whatever senators did participate were not sufficiently important to be named. Indeed, the next we even hear of this delegation is fifty-five chapters later when it is recalled by Otho. Yet, in this brief account of a seemingly inconsequential event, Tacitus has illustrated the total breakdown in Roman imperial government. "His concern is to portray total confusion and indecision" (Morgan 1993, 581): the Senate has abandoned its responsibilities; the senators, who no longer function as a unit, are driven only by personal fear or hope of something better; the emperor has attempted to use the senators for his own political gain, but he is shown to hold sway over neither these senators nor his praetorian prefect. Clearly the significance of Tacitus' account of the embassy is not in its success but in the broader imperial issues it illustrates.

2. *Histories* 1.74.2

As the power of the Senate continued to become more marginalized over the course of the first century of imperial rule, the influence of the Praetorian Guard and Roman legions grew. In fact, the Praetorian

Guard's "crucial role ... in imperial politics" (Keitel 1991, 2777) is demonstrated clearly by its support of Otho in his overthrow of Galba and Piso on January 15. Yet the Guard's backing did not immunize Otho against danger. The threat of Vitellius was still very real, and so this new emperor, too, attempted to assuage his antagonist's troops by sending his own senatorial embassy to Vitellius and his generals. Although Otho's struggles with the Vitellian forces were in some ways similar to those faced by Galba, Tacitus does not merely repeat his account of these diplomatic efforts *mutatis mutandis*. The historian, rather, employs the motif to address a new set of issues, shifting his focus away from the ineptness of the Senate and the emperor to the growing threat and dominance of the legions:

Otho, reuocatis quos Galba miserat legatis, rursus ad utrumque Germanicum exercitum et ad legionem Italicam easque, quae Lugduni agebant, copias specie senatus misit. legati apud Vitellium remansere, promptius quam ut retenti uiderentur; praetoriani, quos per simulationem officii legatis Otho adiunxerat, remissi, antequam legionibus miscerentur. addidit epistulas Fabius Valens nomine Germanici exercitus ad praetorias et urbanas cohortes de uiribus partium magnificas et concordiam offerentes; increpabat ultro, quod tanto ante traditum Vitellio imperium ad Othonem uertissent. (1.74.2)

Otho recalled the envoys whom Galba had sent and sent others again under the guise of the Senate to each German army and to the Italian legion and to those troops which were staying at Lugdunum. The envoys remained with Vitellius too readily to seem detained; the praetorians, whom Otho had attached to the envoys through the pretense of an escort, were sent back before they could mingle with the legions. Fabius Valens in the name of the German army sent letters to the praetorian and urban cohorts which boasted about the strength of his faction and offered terms of peace; moreover he chided them because they had directed toward Otho the imperial power handed to Vitellius long before.

Tacitus compresses a great deal into these three sentences. Placement of *Otho* at the beginning indicates the dominant position this new emperor has assumed. In turn, the phrase that follows, *reuocatis quos Galba miserat legatis*, reiterates how inconsequential Galba's embassy to the German troops had been. Otho recalled those envoys even before they could possibly have reached Germany (Damon 2003, 144). The additional assignments noted for the delegation – now both German legions and an Italian one and the troops at Lugdunum – suggest a greater focus on the military threat from Vitellius. This is confirmed by the manner in which Tacitus

describes the embassy. He begins with the Senate, but he focuses primarily on the praetorians.

Otho sent the delegation, as Tacitus remarks, under the supposed sanction of the Senate (*Otho ... specie senatus misit*). The implication is that Otho had orchestrated this embassy even though he strove to preserve the appearance of the Senate's authority. It is not surprising that Otho acknowledged the Senate, since during the empire "there was an expectation that the Senate should have a role, if only a formal one, in diplomacy" (Sidebottom 2007, 6–7). This short-lived emperor understood the potential value of the Senate as a legitimizing institution for a threatened *princeps* (Winterling 2009, 28–33). After establishing this tone of pretense, Tacitus presents Otho's delegation in two parts, first the *legati*, then the *praetoriani*. The *legati* are summarily dismissed with the observation that their stay with Vitellius was inordinately lengthy (*promptius quam ut retenti uiderentur*). This comment suggests little support for Otho among senators. What is even more remarkable is that no one seemed to care. As Damon rightly points out (2003, 250), "If the defection of these senators increased Vitellius' authority, or detracted from Otho's, no one mentions it." Any legitimacy they might have conferred upon Otho's rule, therefore, was clearly not realized.

Tacitus focuses upon the activities of the praetorians for the remainder of his account. He begins by reiterating the notion of imperial pretense with his claim that the praetorians were sent on the pretext as an escort for the senators (*per simulationem officii*). As their activities are described, however, the implication is that Otho sent the praetorian troops less to honor and protect the senators than to interact with the rogue legionaries (*antequam legionibus miscerentur*). Most likely they were sent to keep an eye on the senators and to win over the Vitellian legions (Fabia 1913, 58; Chilver 1979, 137; see also Wiedemann 1996, 271). Ultimately, these praetorians were Otho's only true representatives, as evidenced by the fact that Fabius Valens sent them back with letters of negotiation for the praetorian and urban cohorts in Rome. In that correspondence Valens rebuked the cohorts for supporting Otho over Vitellius, but he also offered *concordia* – terms of peace. Here, Valens, "probably legionary legate of I Germanica" (Morgan 2006, 54), negotiates with the praetorian and urban cohorts through their praetorian intermediaries. Neither the Senate nor Vitellius is involved. In fact, Tacitus' account includes no actual communication other than this between Vitellius' general and these urban troops. Otho may have sent an embassy *specie senatus*, yet ultimately his praetorians were the only ones involved in any diplomatic activity recorded by Tacitus. This account of the embassy, therefore, highlights the military – generals and praetorians – in the

role of emperor-maker. Tacitus suggests that the significant struggle now is between the Vitellian troops and Otho's loyal Praetorian Guard ("yet the loyalty of the praetorians did not change," *neque ideo praetorianorum fides mutata*, 1.75.1). Between these two groups diplomacy ultimately will not be the answer. Valens, along with Caecina and his soldiers, soon leads his legions to Cremona. In April the legions defeat Otho's army. Otho commits suicide. Vitellius becomes the next emperor. He will survive, however, only as long as his troops defend him.

Since Otho's senatorial embassy was of little consequence, it is easy to understand why Suetonius gives scant attention to it. What the biographer does say at *Otho* 8, however, is instructive. After he reports that the German legions swore allegiance to Vitellius, he adds the following:

Quod ut comperit, auctor senatui fuit mittendae legationis, quae doceret electum iam principem, quietem concordiamque suaderet; et tamen per internuntios ac litteras consortem imperii generumque se Vitellio optulit.

(*Suet., Otho* 8)

When he [Otho] learned this, he got the Senate to send an embassy to inform them that an emperor had already been selected and to urge peace and harmony; yet through messengers with letters he also offered himself to Vitellius as his partner in power and son-in-law.

In Suetonius, there is no mention of the Praetorian Guard and their encounter with Valens, nothing about the delegation going also to the Italian legions and to a cohort at Lugdunum, nothing about the senatorial embassy lingering in Vitellius' camp. What Suetonius does reveal is that Otho was the proposer (*auctor*, OLD 11) of the senatorial embassy and that the purpose of the mission was to reiterate that he was emperor and to urge peace and harmony among the rebellious legions (*quae doceret electum iam principem, quietem concordiamque suaderet*). Tacitus offers a similar message in his account, but from a decidedly different perspective. Valens proffers harmony through letters to Otho's urban troops and points out that an emperor has been saluted – but this emperor is Vitellius, not Otho: *addidit epistulas ... concordiam offerentes; increpabat ultro, quod tanto ante traditum Vitellio imperium ad Othonem uertissent* (cf. *doceret electum iam principem, concordiam suaderet*). Tacitus focuses on the prominence and assertiveness of the general Valens, who will later help lead Vitellius to imperial power. On the contrary, Suetonius observes the senators' diplomatic mission, only to have it undercut by the private letters which Otho sent to Vitellius. For in them he proposed marriage

to Vitellius' daughter and offered to share imperial power with him. Dio and Plutarch also mention this private correspondence. Dio (64.10.1) notes that Otho was "often inviting him to share in imperial rule" (ἐς κοινωνίαν αὐτὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς πολλάκις παρακαλῶν), but makes clear that he "did not persuade Vitellius" (μὴ ἔπειθε τὸν Οὐιτέλλιον). Plutarch's account (*Otho* 4.2–3) is quite different: he states that Otho offered Vitellius "large sums of money and a city" (χρήματα πολλὰ ... καὶ πόλιν), only after he warned him of his subordinate position (παραινῶν στρατιωτικὰ φρονεῖν "advising him to focus on military matters"). Vitellius' responses, which Plutarch also includes along with Otho's later correspondence, allow Plutarch an opportunity to characterize both men, neither one favorably.

Tacitus also mentions letters that Otho and Vitellius sent to one another, but he does so before (1.74.1) his account of the senatorial embassy. Like Plutarch, he uses the correspondence as a forum for denigrating the character of both men. Otho's letters, for example, were "tainted with womanish blandishments" (*muliebribus blandimentis infectae*, 1.74.1) and by the end of their unfruitful correspondence, "each was – rightly so – accusing the other of lecherous and shameful behavior" (*stupra ac flagitia in uicem obiectauere, neuter falso*, 1.74.1). Tacitus distinguishes the official business of Otho from the simultaneous private and personal communications he undertakes with his adversary. Private letters can assume an important role in political and diplomatic maneuvering, of course, but Tacitus does not include these as part of the official negotiations. The unseemly private communication between Otho and Vitellius is certainly of interest to the historian, but he apparently wants to keep Otho and Vitellius removed from his political analysis of Rome. Perhaps we should infer that without a role in the negotiations neither man was a serious contender for extended rule. The soldiers and generals were far more important. For Tacitus, the letters reveal their writers' characters, rather than their contributions to the current political crisis, and they therefore do not belong within his account of the embassy itself.

While all four authors find the discreditable correspondence fitting for their works, only Suetonius and Tacitus consider the delegation of senators worthy of remark. Dio and Plutarch do not even mention the embassy. Tacitus alone delves into the broader political implications of the embassy's outcome, and here the general Valens assumes center stage in his communications with the praetorians. The insignificance of the Senate, whose participation in the embassy is limited to transferring their loyalty to the usurper during the mission, is matched only by the peripheral role of the emperor.

After the first battle of Cremona and the subsequent suicide of Otho, Vitellius would indeed come to power in April 69, but his authority was whittled away over the next eight months. Ultimately, when he could no longer rely upon the support of his powerful generals and praetorian cohorts, Vitellius was left vulnerable to a more authoritative and commanding leader. It is the last attempt by Vitellius to hold off that general, Vespasian, which leads Tacitus to discuss yet another senatorial embassy in Book 3.

3. *Histories* 3.80–81

Vitellius' northern troops shifted their allegiance to Vespasian in the second half of 69. When Vespasian's brother and prefect of the city, Flavius Sabinus, offered Vitellius the opportunity to abdicate peacefully, he initially agreed. Soon afterward, however, Sabinus was forced to take refuge on the Capitol, which was then besieged by Vitellian troops. The ensuing fray culminated in the burning of the Capitol and the murder and decapitation of Sabinus. After an unanticipated military success against the cavalry of Vespasian's general, Petillius Cerialis, in the northeastern suburbs of Rome on the same night (December 19), the Roman people displayed resurgent support for their emperor by taking up whatever weapons they could find to face another Flavian general, Antonius Primus, and his troops who were approaching the gates of Rome. Vitellius encouraged the crowd's enthusiasm, but the Senate was also called and envoys were delegated to negotiate with Cerialis and Primus. Just like the two earlier embassies, these diplomatic efforts were not successful. Vitellius was dead within hours.

Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio record this final attempt at negotiation by Vitellius. Suetonius' account is the most succinct. The biographer states that Vitellius "persuaded the Senate to send senatorial envoys together with Vestal Virgins, in order to sue for peace or at least for time to deliberate" (*suasitque senatui, ut legatos cum uirginibus Vestalibus mitterent pacem aut certe tempus ad consultandum petituos*, Suet., *Vit.* 16). Vitellius is clearly the driving force behind the embassy (*suasit senatui*), and Suetonius specifies that the aim of the Senate's mission, to which were added Vestal Virgins, was peace or an opportunity to negotiate. Just as in his account of Otho's delegation, Suetonius includes the purpose for the embassy. He offers no further comment, however. Dio's account is similar, but it provides additional information:

ὁ γὰρ Οὐτιέλλιος καταλλαγῆσεσθαι ἐκ τῆς ἐπικρατείας ἐλπίσας τοὺς στρατιώτας ἀνεγαίτισεν, καὶ τὴν βουλὴν συναγαγὼν πρέσβεις παρ' αὐτῶν μετὰ τῶν ἀειπαρθένων πρὸς τὸν Κερεάλιον ἐπεμψεν. ὥς δ' οὐδεὶς αὐτῶν ἐσήκουσεν, ἀλλ' ὀλίγου καὶ ἀπέθανον, πρὸς τε τὸν Πρίμον καὶ αὐτὸν ἥδη προσπελάζοντα ἦλθον, καὶ λόγου μὲν ἔτυχον, ἔπραξαν δὲ οὐδέν. (65.18.3–19.1)

For Vitellius, hoping that he could achieve reconciliation on account of his victory [over Cerialis' cavalry], restrained his soldiers; and after he convened the Senate, from those men he sent envoys together with the [Vestal] Virgins to Cerialis. But when no one listened to them – rather they even nearly died – they went to Primus who was also now approaching, and they engaged in conversation, but they accomplished nothing.

In addition to Vitellius' dominant role and an expressed goal of reconciliation for the delegation, Dio notes Vitellius' restraint and a reason for possible success, namely, his recent victory. He also names the generals that the delegation met and comments on the delegation's results: the envoys and Vestals were unsuccessful with Cerialis and actually had their lives threatened; when they arrived at Primus' camp, this second general listened to them, but he was not persuaded.

Another embassy is unsuccessful: ἔπραξαν δὲ οὐδέν.

Tacitus gives us by far the fullest description of Vitellius' attempt at diplomacy. Although he shares some of the details that Suetonius and Dio included, he also incorporates additional and contrary information. In fact, his account serves as a microcosm of major topics that recur throughout the *Histories*. At 3.80, Tacitus writes that envoys were selected during the last chaotic hours of Vitellius' reign to go to the two Flavian generals, Petillius Cerialis and Antonius Primus. He begins his account thus: *mox uocato senatu deliguntur legati ad exercitus, ut praetexto rei publicae concordiam pacemque suaderent* ("Soon afterwards the Senate was summoned and envoys were selected to go to the armies, in order to urge harmony and peace on the pretext of benefiting the state"). Vitellius' absence is the first notable difference between this account and those of Suetonius and Dio. Here, the Senate has been called (*uocato senatu*). Vitellius did not "persuade" (*suasit senatui*) or "convene" (τὴν βουλὴν συναγαγὼν) the Senate or send the envoys (πρέσβεις ... ἐπεμψεν). Tacitus clearly has moved away from the earlier issue of the power dynamic between Senate and emperor. By now his readers understand that the emperor in his diplomatic efforts uses the Senate merely to suggest the legitimacy of his position rather than to negotiate. The anemic senators readily go along with the charade. Therefore, for this account of Vitellius' embassy to Vespasian, Tacitus focuses exclusively on the Flavian generals and select members of the embassies themselves – a praetor, a philosopher, and Vestal Virgins.

According to Dio a single embassy went first to Cerialis' camp where the envoys "nearly died" and then went on to Primus' camp. Dio and Suetonius both mention the Vestal Virgins who accompanied the senators. Tacitus, on the other hand, writes of two separate delegations – one to Cerialis, the other to Primus. Furthermore, he provides additional names and commentary on the events that occurred in both camps. The division into two embassies allows Tacitus to present a much more dramatic and revealing narrative, structured around comparisons of the two Flavian generals and two Stoics who visit their camps (cf. comparison of Drusus and Germanicus, *Ann.* 1.16–49).

In introducing the comparisons in *Histories* 3.80–81, Tacitus remarks that the two embassies were received differently: *uaria legatorum sors fuit* ("The fortune of the envoys varied"). Those who went to Petillius Cerialis' camp "faced grave danger because his army was disregarding the conditions of peace" (*qui Petillio Ceriali occurrerant, extremum discrimen adiere, aspernante milite condiciones pacis*). A few lines later at the beginning of the second half of his comparison, Tacitus recounts the experience of those who went to Antonius' camp: *Aequioribus animis accepti sunt qui ad Antonium uenerant, non quia modestior miles, sed duci plus auctoritatis* ("More reasonably were those received who had gone to Antonius, not because his army was more orderly, but because the general had more authority"). The structure of these two sentences is equivalent: the members of each delegation are the subjects of each sentence and in both cases they are described in a relative clause (*qui Petillio Ceriali occurrerant, qui ad Antonium uenerant*), which includes the general each has come to meet. Both clauses are followed by references to the troops (*milite, miles*). A direct comparison between the two generals occurs at the end of the latter entry, when Tacitus declares that Antonius' troops were more restrained because of his greater authority (*duci plus auctoritatis*).

Before we can fully understand the importance of the comparison of the two generals, however, we need to look carefully at what else Tacitus tells us about these embassies. After learning that emissaries were harmed in Cerialis' camp, we read, "The praetor Arulenus Rusticus was wounded: what increased resentment [at this attack on him], in addition to the violation of the title of envoy and praetor, was the personal repute of the man" (*uulneratur praetor Arulenus Rusticus: auxit inuidiam, super uiolatum legati praetorisque nomen, propria dignatio uiri, Hist.* 3.80.2). Unlike Dio and Suetonius, Tacitus has named an envoy, Arulenus Rusticus (*PIR*² J 730), and recorded that he was a praetor. One of the more powerful members of the Senate, therefore, was part of this embassy, and he was wounded. Yet it was not

Arulenus' official role that Tacitus emphasizes so much as his reputable character: people were especially troubled because the soldiers had harmed a man whom they held in high personal regard (*propria dignatio uiri*, "the regard in which he was held as a man," Wellesley 1972, 182). Arulenus' *propria dignatio* here rivals in importance his roles as praetor and envoy; he clearly is a man worthy of respect.

This is not the first time Tacitus has mentioned Arulenus. He had appeared earlier in the *Agricola*, where Tacitus associated him directly with Thrasea Paetus, the Stoic philosopher well known for challenging Nero. In the second chapter Tacitus reported that in 93 Arulenus was condemned to death for writing a panegyric of Thrasea. Both he and Herennius Senecio, who wrote in praise of the Stoic Helvidius Priscus, Thrasea's son-in-law, were executed (Ag. 2.1). Arulenus wrote this defense of a man who had been compelled by Nero to commit suicide. His own suicide, demanded for this defense of Thrasea, occurred less than twenty years before Tacitus published his *Histories*. When Arulenus is mentioned in this later work, presumably Tacitus would have expected his readers to recall the circumstances of Arulenus' demise and his intimate connection with the famous Stoic. Later, Arulenus will appear at *Annals* 16.26 (among other passages), where Tacitus will again associate him closely with Thrasea. There, when a fiery Arulenus eager for praise (*flagrans iuuenis et cupidine laudis*) offered to veto the senatorial action that would condemn Thrasea to death, Thrasea declared that "[Arulenus] should not undertake an action futile and of no benefit to the defendant but deadly to the one intervening" (*ne uana et reo non profutura, intercessori exitiosa inciperet*, *Ann.* 16.26.5). Because Tacitus frequently emphasizes Arulenus' close association with Thrasea and the Stoics, it is initially surprising that he does not connect Arulenus directly with the Stoics in his account of this embassy, but mentions only his *dignatio*.

Tacitus does make direct reference to the Stoics, however, as he describes the delegation that made its way to the camp of Primus:

miscuerat se legatis Musonius Rufus equestris ordinis, studium philosophiae et placita Stoicorum aemulatus, coeptabatque permixtus manipulis, bona pacis ac belli discrimina disserens, armatos monere. id plerisque ludibrio, pluribus taedio; nec deerant qui propellerent proculcarentque, ni admonitu modestissimi cuiusque et aliis minitantibus omisisset intempestiuam sapientiam.

(*Hist.* 3.81.1)

To the envoys Musonius Rufus had attached himself – a man of the equestrian order, devoted to the study of philosophy,

especially the principles of the Stoics. Mingling with the troops, he began to warn the armed men, discoursing on the benefits of peace and war's dangers. To many this was a cause for mockery, to more, boredom. Nor were there men lacking who would have trampled upon him and driven him out had he not left off his unseasonable philosophizing after the warning of some and threats of others.

That Tacitus is continuing his comparative structure is obvious by his introduction of Musonius Rufus. In the position precisely parallel to his reference to Arulenus Rusticus (*uolneratur praetor Arulenus Rusticus*), Tacitus names Musonius in his account of the embassy to Antonius Primus: *miscuerat se legatis Musonius Rufus*. Contrast is clear. The tone in the former is one of respect and honorable suffering; the latter phrase is far more negative (Damon 2003, 164) and suggests that Musonius was something of an interloper in the senatorial embassy (Murison 1999, 163). This impression of meddling gains strength from Tacitus' emphasis on Musonius' equestrian status: *Musonius Rufus equestris ordinis*. The fact that Tacitus seems to suggest in Book 4 (10.1, 40.3) that Musonius was a senator serves to heighten (*contra* Wellesley 1972, 182) the notion that Musonius was not an official member of this senatorial embassy. If Musonius was a senator, Tacitus goes out of his way here to deny him official status and hint rather that Musonius has imposed himself on this delegation, in a way similar to the praetorians who went along with Otho's senatorial embassy to Vitellius (cf. *miscuerat se legatis Musonius Rufus 3.81.1; praetoriani, quos per simulationem officii legatis Otho adiunxerat, remissi antequam legionibus miscerentur*, 1.74.2). Unlike the official senators, Musonius seems to have joined the embassy more as a personal representative of Vitellius, and it is possible that he was selected precisely because the Flavians "may have been well disposed to Priscus and his group," i.e., the Stoics (Alston 1998, 170). Whatever the reason for his presence, his Stoicism is foremost in Tacitus' characterization of him: *studium philosophiae et placita Stoicorum aemulatus*.

Musonius Rufus (*PIR*² M 753; "The Roman Socrates," Lutz 1947, 3–147) was indeed famous as a Stoic among the Romans during the first century. Nero had earlier exiled him for his alleged participation in Piso's conspiracy, but the philosopher returned when Galba came to power. Shortly after Vespasian became *princeps*, Musonius, along with Helvidius Priscus and other notable Stoics, brought charges against Publius Egnatius Celer, the turncoat Stoic whose evidence in 66 had led to the conviction of his former pupil and fellow Stoic, Barea Soranus. When Vespasian expelled all philosophers from Rome around 74, he actually made an exception for Musonius (Dio 66.13.2). A few

years later, however, Musonius was sent into exile as well (*Ann.* 15.71.4) and was permitted to return only after the death of Vespasian. He died sometime before 101.

The irregular involvement of Musonius implied at the beginning of the account is further in evidence as Tacitus describes his activities in the camp. He spent his time lecturing on peace and war, boring some of the troops and inviting derision from others, but he ultimately had to stop his “unseasonable philosophizing” (*intempestiuam sapientiam*) after he received threats of physical harm. Here is a Stoic philosopher who not only does not persuade any of the soldiers, he actually invites threats against himself. Directly associating him with Stoicism highlights Tacitus’ ambivalence toward Stoics: when acting as philosophers – rather than as senators or envoys, say – they do not benefit the state, but only endanger themselves. As Penwill (2003, 367) has observed, “Outside the comfort zone of his philosophical coterie Musonius regularly lost his audiences, and the self-styled Stoic politicians histrionically impaled themselves on the rulers’ swords instead of working constructively for the advancement of the *res publica*.” This was certainly not the first time philosophers had been sent on diplomatic missions, as the Greek philosophers of 155 BCE illustrate, but clearly Musonius was a poor choice for this mission (Malitz 1988, 165–166). For himself he achieved only threats; he did, however, provide Tacitus an *exemplum* of a Stoic who attracted attention in a manner that was dangerous to himself and ineffective for quelling the conflict.

Musonius’ counterpart, Arulenus, on the other hand, illustrates that Stoics who behave as senators or envoys instead of as Stoic martyrs certainly can serve as honorable citizens. Indeed, Tacitus characterizes Arulenus here as a commendable representative of the Senate, who is wounded while performing his senatorial duty in an attempt to benefit the state. This description of Arulenus in the senatorial embassy, without any acknowledgment of his Stoicism and in contrast both to his Stoic associations elsewhere in Tacitus’ works and to the Stoic philosopher Musonius, suggests that it is not the Stoics *per se* who cause Tacitus such concern, but rather the lack of genuine contributions to the *res publica* so frequently displayed by Stoics when they were more interested in fame and martyrdom (e.g., *Ag.* 42.4; Penwill 2003, 350–352). Certainly, there are too many examples of Stoics acting admirably (e.g., *Ann.* 16.24.2; Turpin 2008, 378–398) to claim convincingly that Tacitus was opposing Stoics or their philosophy as a whole in his writings. Nonetheless, contrasting Arulenus’ *dignatio* and his sacrifice for the state with Musonius’ devotion to Stoicism and the boredom, mockery, and threats he provoked through his *intempestiua sapientia* illustrates Tacitus’ denial

of contributions to the state by Stoics when they present themselves as Stoics first, statesmen second.

The different receptions of Arulenus and Musonius and the other Vitellian representatives also provide contrasting commentary on the two generals in the camps. Tacitus ends his account of the embassy to Cerialis by a detailed description of the chaos that ensued. Not only was Arulenus wounded:

pulsantur [*Kießling*: palantur *MSS*] comites, occiditur proximus lictor, dimouere turbam ausus, et ni dato a duce praesidio defensi forent, sacrum etiam in<ter> exteras gentes legatorum ius ante ipsa patriae moenia ciuilis rabies usque in exitium temerasset.

(*Hist.* 3.80.2)

His companions were beaten, the lictor next to him was killed when he dared to part the crowd, and if they had not been defended by protection provided by the general, before the very walls of the fatherland the madness of civil war would have desecrated – to the point of destroying them – the right of envoys, which is sacred even among foreign nations.

Only after Arulenus and his companions suffered wounds and a lictor was killed does Cerialis begin to offer protection. Cerialis finally gains some control over the soldiers, at least enough to preserve the last vestiges of the “sacred rights of envoys” (*sacrum etiam in<ter> exteras gentes legatorum ius*). This is not the only time Tacitus characterizes Cerialis as a poor leader (cf. *incautum* 3.79.1, *temeritate* 4.77.2) and one who comes to a situation “too late” (cf. two chapters earlier at *Hist.* 3.78.3 and *Ann.* 14.32.6; see also Birley 1973, 182). Tacitus regularly portrays Cerialis as a general who does not get the job done properly. Indeed, Birley has rightly concluded, “it seems indisputable that Tacitus set out to portray him [Cerialis] in an unfavourable light” (1973, 182; cf. Sailor 2008, 76–78).

In contrast, the final section of the account of the embassy to Antonius Primus heightens our sense of his competence and abilities through his honorable treatment of the Vestal Virgins:

obuiaae fuere et uirgines Vestales cum epistulis Vitellii ad Antonium scriptis: eximi supremo certamini unum diem postulabat: si moram interiecissent, facilius omnia conuentura. uirgines cum honore dimissae; Vitellio rescriptum Sabini caede et incendio Capitolii dirempta belli commercia.

(*Hist.* 3.81.2)

Also there to meet him [Antonius] were Vestal Virgins with a letter from Vitellius written to Antonius. He [Vitellius] was

requesting one day be allowed before the last struggle; if they delayed, everything could be agreed upon more easily. The Virgins were dismissed with honor, but the written reply to Vitellius was that the slaughter of Sabinus and the burning of the Capitol put an end to the war negotiations.

Whether the Vestal Virgins went to both camps, as Dio claims, or just to one, Tacitus strengthens his narrative by having them sent only to Primus' camp. There they are treated with great respect, in direct contrast to the violence in Cerialis' camp suffered by Arulenus – a man symbolically comparable to the Vestal Virgins because of the *sacrum legatorum ius*. To the general the Vestals deliver a letter from Vitellius. In turn they receive a written response for Vitellius from Primus declaring all negotiations off because of Sabinus' murder and the burning of the Capitol. In Tacitus' narrative the entire burden of the negotiations rests upon these Vestals and Primus (Heubner 1972, 183). The Vestals' active participation illustrates their importance in Roman politics, the magnitude of the situation, and the desperation of Vitellius (Wellesley 1972, 183; Murison 1999, 117). Rarely did they perform such a political function (cf. Suet., *Iul.* 1.2.6 and Dio 51.19.2). Furthermore, as the only figures directly involved in Tacitus' recorded negotiations, they perform a role structurally similar to that of the praetorians sent out by Otho with his senatorial embassy. While the senators are the ostensible envoys, the real negotiators are the personal representatives of the emperor.

Equally significant, these Vestal Virgins provide a means of characterizing the man they encounter on their mission. At the beginning of the chapter the historian had noted that Primus had greater *auctoritas* than Cerialis (cf. *Hist.* 3.10). At chapter's end we observe that Primus dismissed the Vestals with honor (*cum honore dimissae*). The general knows how the Vestal Virgins of Rome should be treated. After all, "[t]he cult of Vesta was symbolic of the eternal power of Rome" (Ogilvie 1969, 90), and any injury to her sacrosanct and inviolable guardians ("punishable by death," Claridge 2010, 107; see also Saquete 2000, 106; Takács 2008, 86) would be worse than harm even to an envoy. Clearly, Primus is characterized favorably here, especially in comparison to Cerialis. Elsewhere, however, Tacitus has described Primus negatively, concluding, for example, that he was "the worst man in peace, but not to be spurned in war" (*pace pessimus, bello non spernendus*, 2.86.2). Chilver has argued that his negative portrayal in Book 2 in contrast to his image as "the hero of Book 3" is the result of Tacitus' use of different sources (Chilver 1979, 247). Yet, as Goodyear advised about Germanicus (1972, 240–241; see also Williams 2009, 117–118), we are misguided to expect consistency in Tacitean characterization. Furthermore, Ash has recently challenged

the notion of different sources by analyzing more carefully the nature of Primus' character in the *Histories*. Among her conclusions she observes that Primus' "long-term failure reveals how threatened by him the Flavian principate felt" (1999, 165). This brief scene with the Vestal Virgins, illustrating Primus' diplomatic acumen, suggests yet another reason why Vespasian might have felt vulnerable. Such a man could prove a viable challenge to the new emperor's regime.

The commanding authority of Antonius Primus, however, is actually in sharp contrast to his future after the civil war. To be sure, when the Vitellian troops had been defeated, he initially assumed control in Rome, but he soon was relieved of all his authority, reduced to insignificance by Vespasian (Damon 2006, 273). At *Histories* 4.80.2–3, Tacitus records the final noteworthy meeting between the two. There the historian acknowledges both the new emperor's appreciation of the man who brought him to power through military victory and his anxiety over Primus' ability to garner power and his intentions. While maintaining a friendly manner toward him, says Tacitus, the emperor "begins to treat him as less influential and less important" (*paulatim leuior uiliorque haberi*, 4.80.3). As Damon (2006, 273) correctly observes, "Securing authority over those who put him on the throne, as Vespasian does here, is a milestone of imperial success that only Vespasian of the emperors of 69 managed to reach." Because Tacitus has characterized Primus as a general of great command and authority and as one who understands the necessity of proper diplomatic behavior – including protecting the useless Musonius and showing respect to the Vestal Virgins – his complete loss of power becomes a conspicuous indicator of Vespasian's imperial authority, in marked contrast to the emperor's three predecessors (Damon 2006).

The significance of Tacitus' portrayal of Cerialis is more complex. Interpretation requires some background. Cerialis was consul in 70 and 74 and between those years was governor of Britain, where Agricola, Tacitus' father-in-law, was one of his subordinates. Furthermore, Cerialis himself was likely the son-in-law of Vespasian (Townend 1961, 58–59) and perhaps was even co-consul with Domitian in 83 (Birley 1973, 187). If not co-consul, Cerialis seems at least to have been in close contact with Domitian. Agricola most likely began serving as governor of Britain in 77 and stayed until 83 (Shotter 2004, 113). At *Agricola* 8.2–3 Tacitus comments on his father-in-law's ability to avoid the *inuidia* of Cerialis by giving all credit to his superior, and Birley (1973, 179–180) cites this comment as just one of many that will place Cerialis in a dubious light. Furthermore, Tacitus' improbable claim that Domitian's jealousy led to Agricola's recall from Britain (Ag. 39) shows that he sometimes could misinterpret events

because of his “fierce resentment” (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 287). If Shotter is correct on the likelihood “that the decision [to recall Agricola] was taken by Domitian in conjunction with the consul of A.D. 83, who was either Petillius Cerialis himself or a close relative of his” (1999), there are obviously a number of personal reasons why Tacitus might have portrayed Cerialis negatively.

Tacitus’ unfavorable account of Cerialis was likely the result of his belief that Cerialis maltreated Agricola, but it was also partly the result of the comparative structure of his two embassies. Indeed, how Tacitus has manipulated the details of Vitellius’ entire senatorial embassy is striking. First, he has divided the embassy into two outings: one Stoic goes to one Flavian general, the other to the other. To achieve a high level of dramatic comparison, he divides the information about the Stoic senators, so that Arulenus is characterized as a senator and also a man of great repute, but Tacitus does not here mention his association with the Stoics. On the other hand, Musonius is directly associated with the Stoics, but he is not acknowledged as a senator. In fact, Tacitus pointedly describes him as an equestrian (but not so in Book 4). Furthermore, Tacitus makes clear that the wounds suffered by the envoy Arulenus and other members of his delegation were due primarily to the incompetence of the general Cerialis. In turn, there were no casualties in the camp of Primus, specifically because of the greater *auctoritas* of that general. The obnoxious Stoic Musonius suffered no physical harm and the Vestals were dismissed with honor. Yet, in the perverse world of imperial power, Cerialis will flourish, while Primus will lose all political significance. Most of Tacitus’ details of Vitellius’ final attempt at negotiation are not part of the accounts of Dio or Suetonius, and since neither delegation proved successful, the specifics once again appear to be far less important for our understanding of the historical events than for our appreciation of the historian’s manner of writing history. The contrasting embassies highlight the actions of Stoics in imperial politics (detrimental when they act as philosophers, constructive when they conduct themselves as statesmen), as well as the increasing importance of personal representatives in an emperor’s negotiations, the negligible role of senators, and the paradoxical power of a general’s *auctoritas* – both beneficial and threatening if present, but, when lacking, a source of chaos, suffering, and political success. All these issues Tacitus conjures up within his account of Vitellius’ unsuccessful final efforts at diplomacy with two very different generals about to marshal in the last of the four emperors of 69.

4. Conclusion

Gillett (2003, 2) has argued that delegations were far more common than appear in ancient histories, and consequently modern commentators mislead by characterizing specific embassies as extraordinary. Although embassies to Rome may indeed have been frequent and ordinary (Millar 1977, 384–385; Habicht 2001, 18), there is virtually no evidence that during the empire the Senate itself sent embassies to foreign governments. In fact, when not greeting a new emperor, they seem to have been sent out only to rebellious legions and generals when the current emperor was threatened. Yet even if senatorial embassies had been common, Tacitus' account of these embassies would still make them extraordinary in his history, not because they were delegations *per se*, but because they provide an effective forum for interweaving his verdicts on the imperial Senate's impotence, the emperors' incompetence, and the military's empowerment.

The senators showed no initiative in trying to regain one of the most important prerogatives that they enjoyed during the republic – the right and obligation of controlling foreign policy. They shirked their duty and abandoned any leading role in negotiating with those hostile to their emperor, whichever emperor was in power at the time. By this avoidance of duty, the Senate became increasingly marginalized. Yet in Tacitus' accounts of these senatorial embassies, the first three emperors of 69 also do not escape criticism. We see this most prominently in the first delegation, when the historian parallels the Senate's want of authority with the weakness of an emperor who bowed to senatorial pleas and thus had difficulty designating envoys. Additionally, Laco's refusal to accompany the embassy reveals that even the personnel choices Galba managed to make were often not sound (cf. his adoption of Piso).

In the account of Otho's delegation, we see Otho's dominance in establishing the delegation, but then the emphasis shifts to his ultimate reliance upon his Praetorian Guard. This dominance of military personnel is given greater emphasis when Tacitus' only description of diplomatic activity focuses solely upon the Vitellian general Valens and the praetorians. As for the senators, there is no indication that they would not undertake Otho's mission, but their eagerness to stay with Vitellius does suggest that they may have been even less supportive of Otho than the earlier senators were of Galba. Equally significant is that their support of either side ultimately seemed irrelevant.

Finally, the embassies sent by Vitellius to Vespasian's legions are noteworthy in part because of the comparisons Tacitus develops

through his division of the embassy into two parties. Within this comparative framework, he assesses the actions of senators and Stoic philosophers and the contrasting treatment of senators, philosophers, and Vestal Virgins by two generals, one of whom, despite his incompetence in Tacitus' view, will find future political success, the other, who exhibited *auctoritas* and due respect, will be quickly and deftly forced from any position of political power by Vespasian.

The year 69 CE was one of great upheaval and grave missteps. Chaos and uncertainty reigned; successes were short-lived; power frequently led to destruction; the usual procedures made way for new practices: generals, praetorians, philosophers, and Vestals assumed or tried to assume the role of envoys; senators generated insignificance; and three Roman emperors quickly met death. Tacitus manages to include all of these elements within his singular accounts of senatorial embassies to rebellious legions, and he makes use of these different details to explore fundamental aspects of power during 69 and beyond. Comparison with the three other great authors who wrote about the same events illustrates clearly Tacitus' ability to use these ineffective senatorial embassies to exhibit in dramatic fashion different forces that were involved in the changing political and military landscape in Rome. This in turn enables his readers to learn far more about Tacitus' views on the characteristics and contributions of the wide-ranging assortment of individuals involved in these senatorial embassies and their significance in exposing the dynamics of imperial power in that volatile year of the four emperors.

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NOTE

1. Translations are the author's.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Fundamental to the study of Roman imperial diplomacy are Millar

(1977, 1982, 1988) and Talbert (1984, esp. ch. 14). Both scholars provide details on the nature of imperial Roman diplomacy and analysis of the involvement of the Senate, military forces, and emperors. Valuable studies covering Roman diplomacy of the republic and the empire include Campbell (2001) and Eilers (2009), a collection of papers presented at a 2004 conference on Roman diplomacy. The latter also provides an extensive current bibliography, including important new reference works on specific embassies in the republic and empire. Gillett (2003) is helpful for its general comments on embassies and detailed study of embassies in late antiquity.

The bibliography on Tacitus' historiography and specifically his *Histories* is substantial. Still essential is Syme (1958). Martin (1981) is also useful. The commentaries of Damon (2003), Ash (2007), Wellesley (1972), Chilver (1979), Chilver and Townend (1985), and Heubner (1963–1982) variously treat a wealth of literary and historical issues. Wiedemann's chapter in the *Cambridge Ancient History* (1996) is a good source for the political and military events of the period, and Wellesley (2000) and Morgan (2006) provide sound narrative accounts. Among the important works for specific issues discussed in this chapter are Pigoñ (1992), Penwill (2003), Birley (1973), Ash (1999), and Damon (2006).

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Deuotio, Disease, and Remedia in the Histories

Rebecca Edwards

By opening his *Histories* not with the death of Nero, but with the consular year 69 CE, Tacitus locates his work in the annalistic tradition, setting up comparisons with the past (Pagán 2006, 201). In his programmatic introduction, Tacitus states that the events he is about to relate show that “at no other time was it proven by harsher disasters of the Roman people or by more just signs that the gods were concerned not for Rome’s welfare, but vengeance” (*nec enim umquam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus magisque iustis indiciis adprobatum est non esse curae deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem*, 1.3.2). Despite the *grauitas* which Tacitus is trying to convey with this pronouncement of doom, Lucan had said virtually the same thing about the civil war between Caesar and Pompey (4.808–809). Likewise, in the “obituary” of the Capitulum, Tacitus connects the civil war in 69 to battles for Rome under the republic, acknowledging that the Capitulum had been burned before, even in civil war (albeit by private treachery and not public madness, 3.72.1). The most prominent correlation between the situation in 69 and civil wars under the republic is placed before the showdown between Otho and Vitellius in Book 2 of the *Histories*. On the eve of the first battle of Bedriacum, Tacitus takes a rare moment to insert his own opinion as he compares the reported attempts at reconciliation between the two armies to similar situations in previous civil wars, naming Marius and Sulla, Pharsalus and Philippi. While Otho is no Pompey and Vitellius is no Caesar (literally; see *Hist.* 1.62.2, 2.62.2, 3.58.3; cf. Sutherland 1987, 119–121), Tacitus claims that “the same anger of the gods, the same madness of humanity, the same causes of evils drove these men to discord” (*eadem illos deum ira, eadem hominum rabies, eadem scelerum causae in discordiam egere*, 2.38.2; cf. the rather different tone of Plut., *Otho* 9). While Tacitus’ material focuses on the devastating

effects of the civil wars in 69 CE, the use of *eadem* stresses a continuity stretching back to the republic. It was “the *same* anger of the gods, the *same* madness of humanity” which once more drove the Romans to civil war. While the events Tacitus is narrating are unique, the themes are universal and have parallels in Rome’s past.

Tacitus is one of the most enigmatic and subtle of historians. His commemoration of Rome’s distant past is often more complicated than it seems, and his use of republican examples extends beyond the assessment that Tacitus exploits republican material “to dramatize the deficiencies of the present” (Sage 1991, 3419). The bleak picture Tacitus paints in the *Histories* has led even one of the most sanguine scholars to concede, “The picture of Roman society presented in the work is an unpleasant one of pessimism and dark decline” (Scott 1968, 48; but cf. 103). At first glance, Tacitus seems to idolize the past and denigrate his own times, but Tacitus himself rebuts that argument. In a famous digression on luxury in the *Annals*, he admits that during the late republic and Julio-Claudian era wealth corrupted Roman society, but Vespasian was able by his own example to spur others to moderation and humility. Tacitus concludes his digression by proclaiming, “But may these rivalries with our ancestors honorably remain for us” (*uerum haec nobis in maiores certamina ex honesto maneant*, *Ann.* 3.55.5). In the *Histories* Tacitus vividly portrays the horrors of civil war and the breakdown in society but at the same time recognizes continuity between the principate and the republic. In 69 CE the Romans may have forgotten the religious rituals of the past that once saved their state, but Tacitus remains aware of these rituals and uses them in his narrative to show that they continue to function even in the worst of times.

One of these republican rituals exploited by Tacitus is *deuotio*. Tacitus alludes throughout the *Histories* to acts suggesting *deuotio*, a term that in Roman literature encompasses a variety of forms of self-sacrifice. After examining some of the basic characteristics of *deuotiones* which take place in the republic, focusing on the accounts found in Livy, our most complete Roman source for narratives of this ritual in their historical context, we can see how Tacitus includes elements of *deuotio* in his narratives of the deaths of Galba and Otho. Other scholars have proposed that Tacitus alludes to *deuotio* in describing the deaths of Galba (Scott 1968, 57–62; Damon 2003, 184) and Otho (Scott 1968, 89; Schunck 1964, 76), but I do not believe they have fully explored the implications of such allusions. These scholars have seen the deaths of these short-reigning emperors as *deuotiones* which do not achieve their intended effect, contrasting them with the more heroic, and more immediately successful, *deuotiones* found in Livy’s history of the republic. While initially the

attempts of Galba and Otho to sacrifice themselves to save the state may seem like ironic failures, the deaths of these emperors have consequences which extend throughout the narrative. Galba's death begins a chain reaction which is amplified by Otho's suicide, culminating in Vitellius' death and a destructive battle at Rome ultimately won by the Flavians. The disease unleashed by the *deuotiones* of Galba and Otho requires a *remedium* which, according to Tacitus, only Vespasian is able to provide.

1. A Brief History of *deutio*

Before we can explore how Tacitus incorporates self-sacrificial elements suggesting *deuotiones* into his narrative of the deaths of Galba and Otho, we need to understand how *deuotiones* functioned in times of crisis during the republic (Versnel 1981, 143). In its most basic form, a *deutio* is performed when a magistrate has someone consecrated, usually himself, as an expiatory sacrifice to avert disaster and ensure Roman supremacy (Feldherr 1998, 85). The *deutus* serves as the expiatory sacrifice, or *piaculum*, attempting to reconcile the gods to the Roman cause. As the *deutus* is consecrated to the gods, he takes upon himself all of the impurities of the Romans and serves as the carrier of a "plague." When he comes into contact with the enemy army, he can "infect" them, taking them down to the underworld with himself. A *deutus* who fails to be killed by the enemy, because he is *sacer*, or dedicated to the gods, can no longer be considered a member of the Roman state and is not allowed to participate in religious functions (Livy 8.10.13). Tacitus will incorporate all of these aspects of *deutio* into significant moments in the *Histories*.

The first known example of *deutio* occurred in 340 BCE during the battle between the Romans and the Latins at Veseris. The Romans and Latins shared the same gods. Thus, the vows made by both sides put the gods in the middle (Janssen 1981, 372), a situation somewhat analogous to that of a civil war. Livy tells us that on the eve of the battle both of the Roman consuls, P. Decius Mus and T. Manlius Torquatus, were visited by the same dream, warning them that one of them must die to secure victory (8.6). After a *haruspex* confirmed the legitimacy of the dreams, Decius and Manlius agreed to let the battle decide which of them would perform this act of self-sacrifice. When Decius' line began to falter, he summoned the priest. Having been consecrated, Decius armed himself, mounted his horse, and rode into the enemy. Livy describes Decius' act as expiation for all the anger of the gods (*piaculum omnis deorum irae*, 8.9.10). He also says the enemy

soldiers were frightened, as if by a “plague-bearing star” (*pestifero sidere*, 8.10.12). But the gods were not entirely responsible for the victory of the Romans. While the *deutio* did strike fear into the enemy, Decius’ colleague Manlius, through his ability to capitalize on the plague unleashed upon the enemy by Decius’ *deutio*, ultimately ensured Rome’s success. Livy emphasizes the necessity of both divine intervention and military strategy in securing Rome’s victory. The son of this Decius, following the example set by his father, devoted himself during the Battle of Sentinum (10.28–29). There are similarities between the two narratives in Livy. Just as the *deutio* of the elder Decius allowed Manlius time to regroup, Fabius Rullianus was able to take advantage of the *deutio* of the younger Decius. Once again a balance is struck between devotion to the gods and skilled military tactics.

The Decii provide the most famous examples of *deutiones*, but there are others. Livy uses the term *deutio* in a looser sense to describe other acts of self-sacrifice which reconcile the Romans to their gods. In his narrative of the invasion of the Gauls, Livy describes the elderly magistrates who remain in their curule seats as having devoted themselves for their country and their fellow citizens (*deuouisse eos se pro patria Quiritibusque Romanis*, 5.41.2). Levene, arguing against the interpretation of Ogilvie (1965, 725), believes that Livy intends the reader to view the deaths of these magistrates as *deutiones*: “the self-sacrifice is an act of expiation. As such, it contributes to the sense of the revival of Roman values, and, in addition, looks forward to the return of the gods’ favour and the ultimate Roman victory” (Levene 1993, 196). These aged magistrates conjure up images markedly different from those of the Decii riding into battle. If Livy’s readers could conceive of two very different kinds of self-sacrificial acts as both being *deutiones*, there is evidence for a more flexible definition of the term.

Although the most selfless act of *deutio* in Livy occurs outside of the context of war, it nevertheless serves to heal Rome’s fractured relationship with the gods. According to Livy, in 362 BCE a huge chasm opened up in the middle of the Forum (for other sources see Richardson 1992, 229–230). The Romans were instructed that the only way to close the chasm (and ensure Roman supremacy) would be to cast into the chasm that in which the Roman people were most powerful (*quo plurimum populus Romanus posset*, 7.6.2; cf. Varro, *Ling.* 5.148–150). A young warrior named Marcus Curtius realized this meant Rome’s military might, so he offered himself as a sacrifice (*se deuouisse*, 7.6.4). Dressing in armor and mounting his horse, Marcus cast himself into the pit, not only closing the chasm, but also ensuring Rome’s domination over her enemies and the expansion of her

imperium. “For Livy, Curtius’ sacrifice is for the sake of the permanence of Rome (7.6.3); this contrasts with almost all other writers, who regard the main point of the sacrifice as simply being to close the chasm” (Levene 1993, 214). The Lacus Curtius subsequently takes on a significant meaning, like the Capitolium, as a symbol of Roman power. Tacitus will make good use of these sites in narrating the deaths of the three failed emperors in the *Histories*.

Johnson (1976), Leigh (1993), and O’Hara (1990) have noted subtle allusions to *deuotio* in Roman narratives of deaths which are not necessarily defined as such. In the *Aeneid*, for example, Vergil uses language that suggests that Turnus should be seen as a *deuotus* (Johnson 1976, 114–134; cf. Leigh 1993; contra Pascal 1990). Defending himself against the cowardly accusations of Drances, Turnus declares that he has devoted his life for the safety of Latinus and his people (*animam ... deuoui*, *Aen.* 11.440–442). Although Turnus does not win the war, his *deuotio* is not completely unsuccessful. Along with Jupiter’s promise to Juno (*Aen.* 12.829–840), Turnus’ *deuotio* ensures that the Latin name and culture will eclipse that of the Trojans (O’Hara 1990, 83–84). Also, Turnus’ *deuotio*, coupled with Dido’s curse, indicates that Aeneas himself will die a premature death (O’Hara 1990, 103–104). Thus, there is evidence for literary allusions to *deuotio* which imply that a *deuotio* might not have an immediate impact but could still ultimately be effective.

Now that we have seen how *deuotiones* were used in times of crisis and have given a broader definition to the term, we should explore how they function in Livy’s narrative and how we can apply that to Tacitus. In Livy’s history, *deuotiones* serve as *remedia* for the Romans and bring “disease” to the enemy. They also serve as *exempla*, one of the foundations of historiography. Livy’s programmatic *praefatio* explains that he has turned to history seeking *exempla* which might help cure present ills, since “it has come to such a point at these times that we are able to endure neither our vices nor their remedies” (*ad haec tempora quibus nec uitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus peruentum est*, *Praef.* 9). Moles, building on Woodman’s ideas (Woodman 1988, 133–134), believes that Livy intentionally used the plural *remedia* to incorporate two kinds of *remedia* – the Augustan system and the *exempla* of his own history (Moles 1993, 152–153). Tacitus, when relating the comments made during the funeral of Augustus, refers to the Augustan system as a *remedium*: “there was no other remedy for our discordant country than that it be ruled by one man” (*non aliud discordantis patriae remedium fuisse quam ut ab uno regeretur*, *Ann.* 1.9.4). He also endorses the principate in his own voice, stating that after Actium, “it was in the interests of peace that all power be conferred upon one man” (*omnem potentiam ad unum*

conferri pacis interfuit, *Hist.* 1.1.1). Tacitus, like Livy, recognized that the *remedia* for the ills of the state incorporated two concepts – a stable principate (especially after civil war) and the reform of morals through *exempla*.

Livy and Tacitus have more in common than one might initially think. Livy does not blindly idolize problematic heroes of the republic (Levene 2007, 285), nor does Tacitus whole-heartedly condemn his own times (Syme 1958, 564–565; Davies 2004, 224–225). Both authors were trying to explore how the *exempla* of the republic could serve as *remedia* under the principate. “So by what we might call the transitive property of *exempla*, the past can also be brought to bear on the future” (Chaplin 2000, 198). As Tacitus makes clear in the introduction to the *Histories* (1.2–3), “the coming narrative is articulated as a collection of good and bad *exempla*” (Sailor 2008, 163). So that he might better understand the contexts of these *exempla*, Tacitus approaches his history as though he were a doctor performing an autopsy. He will explore “what was strong in the whole world, what was diseased, so that not only the events and outcomes of affairs, which often were fortuitous, but also the reasons and the causes, might be revealed” (*quid in toto terrarum orbe ualidum, quid aegrum fuit, ut non modo casus euentusque rerum, qui plerumque fortuiti sunt, sed ratio etiam causaeque noscantur*, 1.4.1; on this passage and the metaphor of disease in the *Histories*, see Damon 2003, 100). Tacitus, like Livy, is going to use his history to explore the diseases of the state and their remedies.

In republican Rome, *deuotiones* were performed in times of crisis to reconcile the Romans to their gods. Tacitus, as he himself tells us, served as a *quindecimuir* (*Ann.* 11.11.1). Being a priest, Tacitus could not help but incorporate important religious matters into his narrative. Yet he was aware that omens and prodigies were often wrongly interpreted or just plain ignored (Davies 2004, 143). Like Livy, Tacitus believed that religious devotion should be paired with human reason. The *deuotiones* and other religious expiations Livy narrates help to reconcile Rome to her gods, but the results are not always immediate and often require human skill: “As often, Livy seems to be working on two levels; he gives explanations in both human and supernatural terms” (Levene 1993, 22; cf. Liebeschuetz 1967, 48–53). Livy believed that piety and *fortuna* could only bring success if coupled with *uirtus* and *consilium* (Kajanto 1957, 67–76). Likewise in the *Histories*, Tacitus repeatedly pairs the words *fortuna* and *ratio* when describing the success of the Flavians (see esp. 3.59.2; 3.60.2; 3.82; cf. 3.46.3, where trouble on the borders is averted by the *fortuna* of the Roman people and the *consilium* of the Flavians). In 69, the Flavians succeed not only because they have the gods on their side, but also because they are

able to recognize the mistakes of their predecessors and capitalize on the *deuotiones* of Galba and Otho.

As we turn to the deaths of Galba and Otho, we should keep in mind the examples of *deutio* mentioned above. While Scott has argued that Galba's death near the Lacus Curtius forces a comparison to the *deutio* of Marcus Curtius (Scott 1968, 61), there are also strong, if somewhat ironic, allusions to the *deutio* of the elder Decius. Galba's death is predestined and has religious repercussions, and, facing the dangers outside the palace, he dies "as though in battle" (*tamquam in acie*, 3.68.1), lacerated by the weapons of his enemies. Although Otho wins the day, he and his men suffer "madness" later on, culminating in Otho's own self-sacrificing death. Just as Galba's death bears some resemblance to the *deutio* of the elder Decius as narrated by Livy, the death of Otho has similarities to the *deutio* of the younger Decius. Likewise Otho's death "infects" the Vitellians. While Tacitus does not overtly state that the deaths of either of these two men are *deuotiones*, the self-sacrificial aspect of the deaths of Galba and Otho in Tacitus' narrative invites comparison with the sacrifices of the Decii and the other examples mentioned above.

2. The Death of Galba as *loco deuotionis*

Tacitus characterizes Galba as a man who would have made a great emperor had he never been emperor (*capax imperii nisi imperasset*, 1.49.4). While revealing Galba's flaws, Tacitus also tries to emphasize his misguided good intentions. In the council concerning the choice of adoptive heir, Tacitus depicts Galba as reluctant to hand over a state wrested from Nero to the likes of Otho. Using the first person, Tacitus asserts that he believes that concern for the republic entered into Galba's decision (*credo et rei publicae curam subisse*, 1.13.2). Tacitus expresses surprise, reinforced by the adverb *et*, not so much that Galba fails to understand the support of the baser elements for Otho, but rather that care of the republic entered into the decision at all. Tacitus has already told us that the supporters of possible heirs were more interested in personal gain than the welfare of the state (1.12.3). Likewise, when Galba presents his newly adopted son to the Senate, they react according to their private hopes and without care for the republic (*sine publica cura*, 1.19.1). "The first event of the *Histories* therefore shadows the analysis of imperial affairs that appears at 1.1. Nobody cares about the *res publica*" (Haynes 2003, 42). Nobody, that is, except Galba. Galba, when addressing the troops regarding his adoption of Piso, says that he would like to restore the republic, but

knows it is not possible. In place of true republican freedom (*loco libertatis*, 1.16.1), he offers the adoption of the best man. This speech is not found in the parallel tradition (Damon 2003, 29). Tacitus uses Galba's speech to emphasize that Galba's republican sentiments will not work in a post Julio-Claudian principate (Haynes 2003, 51). Nevertheless, if the new principate, based on military selection and back-door dealing, is *loco libertatis*, then perhaps we might envision the death of Galba as *loco deuotionis*.

In describing events leading up to the civil wars, Tacitus depicts a rift in the relationship between the Romans and their gods which needs to be healed. Before Galba's assassination, the reader, and even Galba himself, receives plenty of warning that the gods are angry. Bad weather casts a dark shadow over the day Galba has chosen to announce his adoption of Piso. The thunder and lightning do not frighten Galba, either because he scorned such things as fortuitous, or because things destined by fate, even when revealed, could not be avoided (*contemptorem talium ut fortuitorum, seu quae fato manent, quamuis significata non uitantur*, 1.18.1). Tacitus suggests that Galba should have taken the hint from the gods. More importantly, he should have seen the soldiers' discontent at his adoption of Piso (Keitel 2006, 227). Unlike Plutarch and Suetonius, who do not explain why Galba chose to adopt Piso in the praetorian camp as opposed to the Capitol (where Nerva had adopted Trajan; cf. Sailor 2008, 228–229), Tacitus demonstrates how unaware Galba is of his situation. For Tacitus, Galba is deserted by *fortuna* and fails to exhibit *ratio*. He is destined to fall, but his death will not be entirely fruitless.

In his narrative of Galba's end, Tacitus incorporates subtle elements indicating that Galba is a *deuotus*. Galba explains to the soldiers that he has chosen Piso “by the example of Divine Augustus and the military custom whereby one man chooses another” (*exemplo diui Augusti et more militari, quo uir uirum legeret*, 1.18.2). The latter of these examples seems rather ill-omened. By referring to the *lex sacrata*, an ancient Italian custom for choosing men for military service, Galba attempts to recall old-fashioned military discipline. Augustus may have used this phrase when inaugurating a new selection process for the Senate (Suet., *Aug.* 35), but readers of Livy (10.38) might remember that this practice was first devised by the Samnites and that many of those who swore this military oath ended up dead (Oakley 2005, 393). Aside from the brutal enforcement of the levy, there is also the notion that those who have taken such an oath are *sacri*, or dedicated to the gods. This same term is used to describe one who has been consecrated to perform a *deuotio* (Oakley 1998, 482). If Galba is adopting Piso using terms which suggest a *lex sacrata*, then both are *sacri*. Tacitus implies that Galba, while using language reminiscent of

the *lex sacrata* and trying to restore republican customs, fails to understand the very customs he is idealizing.

As the narrative progresses toward Galba's inevitable death, Tacitus continues to use language which depicts Galba posing as the champion of old-fashioned Roman *mores* but unable to accept the signs of his own impending doom. On January 15, Galba is sacrificing in front of the Temple of Apollo, presumably that on the Palatine hill which Augustus had dedicated (and the same place where Vitellius will agree to resign his power, *in aede Apollinis*, 3.65.2). The *haruspex* tells Galba that the entrails are bad, that there are plots afoot, and that he should beware of a *domesticus hostis* (1.27.1; cf. Plut., *Galba* 24.2; Suet., *Galba* 19.1). The phrase suggests Vitellius, who is rebelling in Germany, and not Otho, who is standing right next to Galba. While support for Otho grows, Galba continues to sacrifice to gods of an empire no longer his own (*alieni iam imperii deos*, 1.29.1). It was not uncommon in Roman religion for magistrates making sacrifices to repeat rituals in hopes of a better result, but Tacitus depicts Galba as boring (*fatigabat*) the gods, who have turned their attention elsewhere. Galba does not recognize, or does not want to recognize, the clear signs of his own impending doom. While Otho is heartened by the signs given by the *haruspex* which predict Galba's end, "Galba elicits scorn because of his unwillingness to elude fate. He walks straight into a trap" (Pagán 2006, 204). Yet, things ordained by fate, even when foretold, cannot be avoided.

When news of Otho's coup reaches the palace, Galba and his minions debate their next move. In the end they decide to face the danger, even if it means death (*si cadere necesse sit, occurrendum discrimini*, 1.33.2). Galba and his party are willing to die because it will create animosity against Otho and bring glory to themselves (*id Othoni inuidiosius et ipsis honestum*, 1.33.2). At this point Galba and his supporters have not yet heard the rumor that Otho has been killed, so their decision is based on their willingness to meet a growing threat from the enemy. Once again, however, Galba fails to live up to his republican ideals. Piso is sent to the guard, not Galba, whose authority is to be preserved intact as a greater remedy (*cuius integra auctoritas maioribus remediis seruabatur*, 1.29.1). Tacitus has already indicated these *remedia* will not be effective. Following his assessment of Galba's *antiquus rigor* and *seueritas*, Tacitus reminds his readers that the Romans are no longer equal to such standards (*cui iam pares non sumus*, 1.18.3). Galba's old-fashioned *seueritas* alienates his contemporaries. In an address to his supporters, Otho calls the *remedia* of Galba *scelera* (1.37.4). Galba tries to apply *remedia*, but his attempts are undermined by his failure to recognize that republican paradigms can only function under the principate when the princeps wields

auctoritas.

After a rumor reaches the palace that Otho has been killed, Galba finally heads outside to confront the increasing chaos. Dio (63.6.3) and Plutarch (*Galba* 26.2) claim that the emperor was going to the Capitolium to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the gods, but Tacitus portrays Galba as leaving the palace when danger might still be present, describing him as intrepid in the face of those threatening him (*minantibus intrepidus*, 1.35.2). “Unlike Plutarch, Tacitus concentrates in almost every chapter on the low motives of all involved ... Galba alone proves *aduersus blandientes incorruptus* (1.35.2)” (Keitel 2006, 228). This phrase is reminiscent of Tacitus’ previous comment on Galba’s misguided failure to pay the donative, namely, that Galba claimed his soldiers were chosen, not bought. Tacitus praises this noble principle while recognizing its inevitable outcome; this statement was honorable for the republic, but deadly for Galba (*uox pro re publica honesta, ipsi anceps, legi a se militum, non emi*, 1.5.2). As he leaves the palace, though old and feeble, Galba, like Decius, straps on his armor. However, his heroic gestures are diminished by the fact that he does not mount a horse, but is carried by others in a litter (*sumpto thorace ... sella leuaretur*, 1.35.1; for the importance of the horse in the *deuotio*, see Versnel 1981, 152–156). While Galba has not been consecrated as a sacrificial victim by a *pontifex*, he has certainly been marked for death by the gods and has decided to face imminent danger. Plutarch (*Galba* 26.5) claims that Galba was assisted by a single centurion, Sempronius Densus; according to Tacitus, Densus defends Piso (1.43.1) and Galba meets the Othonians utterly alone. The only soldiers in Rome who might have helped Galba are the legions recuperating at Galba’s expense in the Atrium Libertatis (1.31.3). When they fail to materialize, Galba is pushed hither and thither by the crowd until he is finally surrounded by his assassins.

Suetonius and Tacitus both mention two accounts of Galba’s reaction to his impending death. He either begged for more time to pay the donative or offered his throat to the assassins and said that they should kill him. When Tacitus gives two variants in the narrative, in cases where he does show a preference he almost always tends to endorse the latter (Whitehead 1979, 493). Indeed, Suetonius and Tacitus seem to favor the more noble account of Galba’s death by stating that more authors (*plures*) reported that Galba died bravely. Suetonius records last words for Galba similar to those found in Tacitus, but with a rather different tone. He claims Galba told the soldiers that they should kill him, since it seemed best (*ut hoc agerent ac ferirent, quando ita uideretur*, *Galba* 20). Tacitus adds that Galba asked the soldiers to kill him if it was in the best interests of the state

(*agerent ac ferirent, si ita e re publica uideretur*, 1.41.2; cf. Plut., *Galba* 27.1). After comparing Tacitus' narrative to that of Plutarch, Keitel summarizes: "In both accounts, Galba tells the soldiers to kill him if it will benefit the state. ... But Tacitus, through choice of detail and structure, lends more weight to these themes than does Plutarch" (Keitel 2006, 232). Tacitus comments that it made no difference to his killers what Galba's last words were (*non interfuit occidentium quid diceret*, 1.41.2). While on the surface this undermines Galba's attempt to give meaning to his death, on a deeper level Tacitus suggests that these oblivious assassins will later pay for their actions.

Just as Tacitus has subtly made comparisons between Galba's death and the *deuotiones* of the Decii, he underlines the significance of the site of Galba's death, the Lacus Curtius. To heighten this allusion, Tacitus uses language which echoes that found in Livy's account of Curtius' *deutio*. Curtius, to appease the gods and guarantee Rome's *imperium*, agrees to sacrifice himself. As he prepares to ride into the chasm, he looks around at the temples of the immortal gods which overlook the Forum and the Capitolium (*templa deorum immortalium, quae foro imminet, Capitoliumque*, Livy 7.6.3–4). In the *Histories* when Galba leaves the palace to meet his fate, he is pushed into the Forum by the crowd. Unlike Marcus Curtius, who draws strength from the temples and the Capitolium, Otho's troops are not deterred by the view of the Capitolium and the *religio* of the overlooking temples (*Capitolii aspectus et imminetium templorum religio*, 1.40.2). Instead they chase Galba to the Lacus Curtius and there he dies. Comparing Tacitus' narrative with that of Plutarch, we can see a significant difference. Plutarch mentions the site of Galba's murder, "but makes no comment on the *religio* the settings ought to inspire" (Keitel 2006, 235). By casting himself into the Lacus Curtius, the eponymous republican hero was able to "restore the proper relationship between Rome and its gods, thus saving the state" (Scott 1968, 57). The failure of the Othonians to recognize the significance of the Lacus Curtius will ultimately grant greater power to Galba's *deutio*.

Feldherr sees Tacitus' treatment of Galba's death as "the most dramatic reversal of the Livian paradigm" (1998, 224). Yet Tacitus, by associating the Lacus Curtius with the site of Galba's death, allows Galba's death to have some meaning. In fact, the Lacus Curtius becomes the symbol of Galba's self-sacrifice, just as it had once been the symbol of Curtius' *deutio*. After the death of Otho, "the people carried images of Galba with laurel and flowers around the temples, with garlands piled up in the manner of a *tumulus* next to the Lacus Curtius, which place Galba, dying, had infected with his blood" (*populus cum lauru ac floribus Galbae imagines circum templa tulit, congestis in modum tumuli coronis iuxta lacum Curtii, quem locum Galba*

moriens sanguine infecerat, 2.55.1). Tacitus colorfully stresses the fact that Galba's *deuotio* has unleashed disease and that the violence will continue until Galba's enemies have succumbed to this disease.

Not only do the Vitellians not remember the republican meaning of the Lacus Curtius, they do not acknowledge their own role in Galba's death (Scott 1968, 60). While Otho was immediately responsible for the death of Galba, Tacitus reminds the reader that it was the rebellion of the German troops that set the stage for Otho's coup. Immediately after Galba's obituary (1.49), Tacitus gives a detailed account of the mutiny of the German troops, reinforcing the idea that while the Vitellians will face the Othonians in battle, their initial revolt was against Galba (1.50–56). When Vitellius' soldiers come to Rome they desire to visit the site of Galba's death (2.88.3), not out of any particular reverence for the dead emperor, but from morbid curiosity. Tacitus describes the Vitellians as wild men, wearing the skins of beasts and creating chaos throughout the city. While their visit should conjure up feelings of sadness over the death of an emperor, to them the Lacus Curtius is no more than a tourist attraction (on this tourism as reminiscent of the Gauls in 390 BCE, see Ash 1999, 45). Moreover, they do not think of Galba's death as an *exemplum*, a *deuotio*, or even a savage spectacle; rather they themselves are the savage spectacle (*nec minus saeuum spectaculum erant ipsi*, 2.88.3). Here Tacitus foreshadows the spectacle about to take place in the battle for Rome, in which the Vitellians, who fail to recognize both the ancient and the contemporary significance of the Lacus Curtius, will be defeated by the Flavians.

Tacitus brings his narrative full circle, giving even greater power to Galba's *deuotio* by stressing that Vitellius, as he was being led to his death, was dragged past the Lacus Curtius. "With hostile swords they drove Vitellius, having been compelled now to raise his face and to suffer insults, now to look at his statues falling, more often to look at the rostra or the place where Galba was killed" (*Vitellium infestis mucronibus coactum modo erigere os et offerre contumeliis, nunc cadentes statuas suas, plerumque rostra aut Galbae occisi locum contueri ... propulere*, 3.85.1). Tacitus does not refer to the Lacus Curtius by its republican name, but as the place where Galba had been killed, reminding us that the site has acquired a new meaning through Galba's *deuotio*. By highlighting the role played by the Lacus Curtius in Vitellius' death, Tacitus assures his readers that Galba has been avenged.

If Tacitus is suggesting to his readers that Galba's death is a version of the republican *deuotio*, Otho's death, as well as that of Vitellius, is to be expected. "Not only does the *deuotus* actively terrify the enemy, but the death he suffers ensures that they too will die" (Feldherr 1998,

89). When the *deuotus* rides into the midst of the enemy, he brings with him a certain *pestis* which taints them. Tacitus uses this imagery of disease to depict the growing *pestis* within the state. As he begins his narrative of Galba's death, Tacitus describes the state of mind of the soldiers who support Otho as infected with a disease (*infecit ea tabes*, 1.26.1). While admittedly this indicates the presence of disease before Galba's *deuotio*, Tacitus links the *tabes* to the threats against Galba's life from the Vitellians and Othonians. The plague arises after the news of the revolt of the troops in Germany has arrived at Rome (*postquam uulgatum erat labare Germanici exercitus fidem*, 1.26.1). Under the influence of this contagion, the Othonians plot to kill Galba. They hesitate, not from concern for the republic (*non rei publicae cura*), but out of fear that Otho might not be recognized in the chaos (1.26.1). In the same sentence Tacitus indicates the willingness of the Othonians to stain themselves with the blood of their emperor. Galba has already been marked for death by these diseased men. Subsequently, as a result of Galba's *deuotio*, the disease grows stronger and spreads among those responsible for Galba's death.

3. Otho's Self-Sacrifice

In his narrative of the civil war between Otho and Vitellius, Tacitus continues to exploit the motif of disease and remedy. When Otho's men threaten the Senate, Tacitus tells us the best men were seeking a remedy for the present license (*optimus quisque remedium praesentis licentiae posceret*, 1.83.1). Otho tries to apply a remedy by addressing the mutinying men and commending their misplaced *pietas*. Immediately after this disturbance, Tacitus narrates some prodigies which foreshadow Otho's doom. While Tacitus includes a note of cynicism regarding the validity of these prodigies, the people believed them to be bad omens. The most important of these bad omens is a flood of the Tiber. Not only does this flood bring devastation and famine, it also blocks the main route for Otho's expedition to face Vitellius (1.86). As Tacitus says, even if the road was blocked "by accidental or natural causes, it was turned into a prodigy and an omen of imminent disasters" (*a fortuitis uel naturalibus causis in prodigium et omen imminantium cladum uertebatur*, 1.86.3; Morgan 2000, 33–34).

Otho tries to expiate the omens by performing a *lustratio*, a ceremony to ritually purify the city. His attempt to garner the respect of the gods contrasts with his savage treatment of his enemies. After the death of Piso, Tacitus tells us Otho was said "to have examined no other head with such insatiable eyes" (*nullum caput tam insatiabilibus*

oculis perlustrasse, 1.44.1). Likewise, Vitellius later surveys the battlefield at Bedriacum, “a foul and savage spectacle” (*lustrare oculis ... foedum atque atrox spectaculum*, 2.70.1). Morgan believes that the phrase *lustrare oculis* is too common to tie these two passages together (Morgan 1992, 15 n. 7). But Tacitus does not use such words so casually. The fact that he applies this verb in these particular contexts emphasizes Tacitus’ portrayal of Otho and Vitellius as being unable to recognize true omens or to expiate such omens through religious acts. Instead of performing effective *lustrationes*, they are said to survey (*lustrare oculis*) the corpses of their enemies. Tacitus contrasts their failure with Vespasian’s ultimate success in his description of the Senate’s statement to Vespasian at the end of the civil war that now the entire world had been purified as if by a *lustratio* (4.3.3).

Tacitus had warned us that Galba was going to die because of his failure to recognize and/or expiate omens of his impending doom. Likewise, Otho’s inability to perform a proper *lustratio* sets the stage for his death, which, like Galba’s, will contain elements of *deuotio*. When Otho sets out to face Vitellius, Tacitus describes the people of Rome obsequiously accompanying him as if he were Caesar or Augustus, thus competing in their devotion and vows (*ita studiiis uotisque certabant*, 1.90.3). In his commentary on this passage, Heubner notes that the only other occurrence of this phrase is in the *Astronomica* of Manilius (*certantesque Deci uotis*, 1.789; Heubner 1963, 1.198). The flattery of the Roman people toward an emperor such as Otho contrasts with the *deuotiones* of the Decii, who gave their lives for their country, but at the same time it also foreshadows Otho’s own imminent *deuotio*. As he marches off to battle, Otho, like Galba, arms himself with a breastplate (*lorica ferrea*, 2.11.3). Both emperors take on the mantle of a *deuotus*, marked for death by the gods and willing to die in battle for the sake of their country.

As he prepares to narrate Otho’s *deuotio*, Tacitus informs us that the disease already present in Otho’s men has now been amplified by Galba’s *deuotio*. In particular, the murderers of Galba are driven mad by their crime and fear (*scelere et metu uecordes*, 2.23.5; Sage 1990, 892). This madness extends to Otho, who despite the warnings of his most seasoned generals, decides to fight at Bedriacum (contra Murison 1993, 114–130). Expanding some of the arguments found in the parallel tradition, Tacitus has Suetonius Paulinus propose that the Othonians should wait for reinforcements to arrive. Paulinus further argues that extending the campaign into the summer will favor the Othonians because Vitellius’ German soldiers will be unable to bear the heat. The expression used by Tacitus to summarize Paulinus’ argument, that the Vitellians, “should the campaign be extended into the summer, would hardly be able to tolerate the changes of

environment and climate with their bodies weakened” (*tracto in aestatem bello fluxis corporibus mutationem soli caelique haud toleraturos*, 2.32.1), echoes language used by Livy in describing the Gauls at Sentinum. Fabius argues that prolonging the battle would ensure Roman success since “the bodies of the Gauls, being most intolerant of labor and heat, would weaken” (*Gallorum quidem, etiam corpora intolerantissima laboris atque aestus fluere*, 10.28.4; Ash 2007, 165; cf. Ash 1999, 46–47). Livy’s comment regarding the Gauls and their inability to tolerate heat immediately precedes the *deuotio* of the second Decius Mus.

Moreover, in the debate between Otho and his generals, Tacitus creates a comparison with the dynamic between Fabius Rullianus and the younger Decius. Fabius, the elder consul at the Battle of Sentinum, recognizes that the Gauls will wear themselves out. The impetuous Decius is eager to imitate his father and earn glory. Decius had more or less determined to devote himself before the battle; he had a priest on standby (Schönberger 1960, 227). Likewise, Otho was prepared to die long before he committed suicide. “Otho’s predisposition to suicide is foreshadowed before he even makes his bid for power” (Ash 2007, 201). After learning of Piso’s adoption, Otho tells himself that he is now a threat to the new regime and that if he must die, it is better that he should deserve his death (*ac si nocentem innocentemque idem exitus maneat, acrioris uiri esse merito perire*, 1.21.2). Despite valid reasons why he should avoid combat and wait for the other side to lose momentum, Otho, like Decius, rushes into battle. When Otho intimates that he wants to fight, his brother and his praetorian prefect assert that fortune, the gods, and his own *numen* are on his side (2.33.1). Ironically, however, as Tacitus has already indicated through the list of omens before Otho set out from Rome (1.86), Otho, like Galba, has already been doomed by the gods.

Otho decides on battle and yet, like Galba, reserves his *auctoritas* for a later date. Both recognize the disease in the state and the need for a remedy, but they fail to apply that remedy in a timely manner. Galba’s decision to send Piso to the troops undermined the power of the *princeps* and rendered any further *remedia* ineffective. Likewise, when Otho decides to withdraw to Brixillum, Tacitus marks this as the turning point in the war; this day first crippled the Othonian party (*is primus dies Othonianas partes afflixit*, 2.33.3). The verb *afflixit* indicates that the men have been struck down, as from a disease (*OLD affligo* 6). Tacitus carries the idea further with the vivid statement that the spirit of the remaining Othonians was broken (*remanentium fractus animus*, 2.33.3). Otho’s absence from the battlefield undermines morale. To drive the point home, Tacitus (in *oratio obliqua*) here refers to Otho as *imperator*. This not only highlights the irony of Otho

abandoning his men (Heubner 1963–1982, 2.127) but also invites comparisons with republican generals like the Decii who faced the enemy in battle. Otho would like to live up to these models but cannot. He can, however, give his life for his country after the battle is over.

Even before he hears news from the battlefield announcing that the Vitellians have won a rather heated contest, Otho is determined to die (*consilii certus*, 2.46.1). Although his men promise that they will keep fighting, Otho refuses to allow the bloodshed to continue. Like Galba, he sacrifices himself out of concern for the republic. Otho tells his nephew that his decision to die has spared the state from the ultimate disaster (*remisisse rei publicae nouissimum casum*, 2.48.2). In contrast to Plutarch (*Otho* 13.2), who indicates Otho may have been influenced by his officers to commit suicide, Tacitus shows that Otho's decision to die is entirely voluntary (Schunck 1964, 75). In fact, while Plutarch (*Otho* 15) depicts one of Otho's soldiers as setting an example which Otho then follows, Tacitus emphasizes that Otho's suicide is his own idea. Tacitus' Otho does not need an example to convince him to sacrifice himself; he willingly dies so that his men can live (*este superstites*, 2.47.3). Later on, Tacitus commemorates a self-sacrificing soldier named Julius Agrestis who commits suicide in front of Vitellius (3.54). By transferring this *exemplum* to his narrative of Vitellius' final days, Tacitus makes Otho's decision to commit suicide his own and shows Vitellius as unwilling to die for his country, even when given such a courageous example to follow. Tacitus further reinforces the image of Otho as a *deuotus* in describing the devotion Otho's men feel for him. When describing how some commit suicide on the pyre of their emperor, Tacitus uses language which evokes parallels between Otho's death and that of Decius: "*caritas principis* may evoke Livy's *caritas ducis* (10.17.3), describing the soldiers' affection for their general Decius Mus, who famously sacrificed his own life for his country by *deuotio*" (Ash 2007, 213). Those of Otho's men who do survive harbor hatred toward Vitellius, which allows them to be courted by Vespasian (2.77.3). In this respect Otho's *deuotio* is successful, since his men will ultimately win when fighting on the Flavian side.

Not only does Otho's *deuotio* compel his men to fight for the Flavians, it also infects the Vitellians with disease. Just as the Lacus Curtius was contaminated by Galba's death, Bedriacum, the site of the final battle before Otho's death, is infected. Tacitus describes the soil as infected with gore (*infecta tabo humus*, 2.70.1). Manolaraki, studying the language used by Tacitus to describe Vitellius' visit to Bedriacum (which features words such as *foedum*, *atrox*, *inhumana*, and *dira*), concludes: "The adjective *foedum* is an especially good

example of this fusion between the visual and the censorious, suggesting simultaneously the biological and religious contamination caused by the unburied dead” (Manolaraki 2005, 249). After the destruction of Cremona, it too is contaminated with gore (*noxia tabo humus*, 3.35.1). The ground is so soaked with blood that the army must find other quarters. While some have seen this connection between Bedriacum and Cremona as a black mark against the Flavians (Ash 1999, 65), I believe Tacitus uses this motif to contrast the religious attitudes of the two sides. The Flavians distance themselves from the contagion. Tacitus even states that Vespasian encouraged the citizens of Cremona to rebuild (3.34.2).

In addition to the abstract concept of contagion, Tacitus exploits in his narrative the physical disease (absent in Suetonius) which afflicts the Vitellians after Otho’s death (2.93.1). Vitellius himself falls ill (3.38.1), as does Valens (2.99.1), the only general Vitellius can trust besides his brother. While the plague can be attributed to the fact that many of Vitellius’ soldiers were unused to the climate of Rome, Tacitus uses it to cast an ominous shadow over Vitellius’ principate. Galba and Otho had at least tried to heal the rift between the Romans and their gods. Tacitus explicitly states that Vitellius was ignorant of Roman religious principles, exemplified by his assumption of the position of *pontifex maximus* on the anniversary of the disasters at Cremera and the Allia River (2.91.1). Tacitus continues to develop this motif as the Flavians mount their challenge to Vitellius. When describing the bad omens Vitellius received at Mevania, Tacitus concludes that the foremost prodigy was Vitellius himself (*praecipuum ipse Vitellius ostentum erat*, 3.56.2). “This version is patently Tacitus’ own interpretation. We have Dio’s account too, and though it has been abbreviated brutally by Xiphilinus, it is noticeably different (65.16.1) ... Dio has Vitellius upset by the omens, not made into one of them” (Morgan 2000, 30–31).

Furthermore, while Tacitus depicts Galba and Otho as trying unsuccessfully to heal the state, Vitellius wounds it (*lacerare imperium*, 3.55.2). When news is announced of the Flavian invasion, he conceals the defeat at Cremona and defers the remedies of his evils rather than the evils themselves (*remedia potius malorum quam mala differebat*, 3.54.1). Faced with the inevitable, Vitellius defends his decision to abdicate, stating that he is stepping aside for the sake of peace and the republic (*pacis et rei publicae causa*, 3.68.2), but his concern in his final days is for himself and his family, not the state. Not only was Vitellius unwilling to die, “he handed over the fiercest army, and one ready to resist until the end, to be slaughtered and captured” (*acerrimum militem et usque in extrema obstinatum trucidandum capiendumque tradidit*, 3.56.3). Unlike Galba, who meets his end as though in battle

(*tamquam in acie*, 3.68.1), and Otho, who commits suicide to end the war, Vitellius tries to retreat without facing the consequences. Tacitus depicts Vitellius as an “anti-*deuotus*.”

In his obituary of Vitellius, Tacitus succinctly states “it was by no means doubtful that it was in the interests of the state that Vitellius be vanquished” (*rei publicae haud dubie intererat Vitellium uinci*, 3.86.2). This echoes the language used by Galba when he asked the soldiers to kill him if his death would benefit the republic. Both emperors are carried from the palace on a litter, unsure of their authority. Likewise, both emperors die alone. Galba is utterly abandoned by his men. While the soldiers fight for Vitellius, he is deserted by his courtiers (Schunk 1964, 50). Vitellius, however, “neither dies bravely nor prevents the carnage in the city by persuading his followers to withdraw (3.66.1)” (Keitel 1992b, 349). As Vitellius is led to his death, Tacitus depicts him as “a foul sight” (*foedum spectaculum*, 3.84.5), the same phrase he had used to describe the gruesome scene which Vitellius surveyed at Bedriacum (2.70.1). Just as Tacitus ties together the deaths of Galba and Vitellius with the Lacus Curtius, he connects Otho’s defeat at Bedriacum with Vitellius’ downfall. Galba and Otho have had their revenge, thanks to the Flavians.

4. Flavian *remedia*

Throughout his narrative Tacitus tells us how the Flavians used the discontent fostered by the deaths of Galba and Otho to their advantage. Tacitus implies that Otho’s *deuotio* helped the Flavians, informing us that the Flavian movement gained even greater momentum from the support of the First Legion, which was hostile to Vitellius due to their fond remembrance of Otho (*quae memoria Othonis infensa Vitellio*, 3.44.1). The Tenth and Sixth legions followed their lead. “Whether or not Otho’s suicide was genuinely courageous and altruistic, it served Vespasian’s interests to exaggerate these characteristics and to establish himself as Otho’s avenger” (Ash 1999, 87; cf. Nicols 1978, 97). Likewise, although Suetonius claims that Vespasian annulled honors granted to Galba, believing Galba had sent assassins to kill him (*Galba* 23), Tacitus only mentions the proposal, brought before the Senate by Domitian on his father’s behalf, which restored these honors (*Hist.* 4.20; on Vespasian’s espousal of Galba, see Gagé 1952). Tacitus does not give any indication that there was animosity on Vespasian’s part toward either Galba or Otho. While Tacitus does not idealize Galba or Otho, he gives their deaths greater meaning than is found in the parallel tradition and supports the view

of the Flavians as capitalizing on their *deuotiones*.

Although Tacitus removes Vespasian from the contagion which afflicts Rome during the civil war, the Flavian generals are forced to come into contact with it. No other Flavian general receives as much attention from Tacitus in the *Histories* as Antonius Primus. Tacitus asserts that while the other generals were obscure, fame and fortune exposed Antonius to the eyes of all (*ceteri duces in obscuro: Antonium fortuna famaue omnium oculis exposuerat*, 3.32.3). After the Flavians had secured Rome, the highest power fell to Antonius (*summa potentiae in Primo Antonio*, 4.2.1). Tacitus portrays Antonius as the *imperator* in charge of the Flavian army, distancing Vespasian from the war (Wellesley 1972, 5; cf. Damon 2006, 271–273). As *imperator*, Antonius would be capable of sacrificing himself through *deuotio*. Certain aspects of Tacitus' portrayal of Antonius suggest an unsuccessful *deuotio* and its consequences. The epithet *unus uir*, used in Livy for those who sacrifice themselves for the state, is given to Antonius Primus by his men at *Histories* 3.3 (Santoro L'Hoir 1990, 230; cf. *uni Antonio*, 3.10.3). More importantly, in the midst of a mutiny in the Flavian ranks, Antonius threatens to kill himself and asks the gods of war to transfer the madness and discord of his own men to the enemy (*bellorum deos, hostium potius exercitibus illum furem, illam discordiam inicerent orabat*, 3.10.4). While threatening suicide was a common device used by generals facing mutinous men (Ash 1999, 158; cf. Germanicus at *Ann.* 1.35), the combination of Antonius' offer to sacrifice himself with the plea for the gods to spread madness and discord among the enemy mirrors the key themes of a *deuotio*. Tacitus also contrasts the rashness of Antonius with the reserved calculations of Vespasian, suggesting yet another analogy to Decius Mus and Fabius Rullianus (Ash 1999, 149, 155). But Antonius does not die. If Antonius is a failed *deuotus* as Tacitus has suggested, then he must be excluded from Roman politics and religion. Antonius' eclipse can be witnessed in the narrative, as Tacitus depicts an increasingly arrogant Antonius exasperating Vespasian's patience (4.80; on Tacitus' depiction of Antonius, see Ash 1999, 147–165; on Antonius' career and motivation, see Nicols 1978, 141–145).

The *deuotiones* of Galba and Otho have helped the Flavians to overcome Vitellius and begin the healing process. Any residual contagion is absorbed by Antonius Primus, who serves as a Flavian scapegoat and is excluded from power. In Book 4, Tacitus uses the wars against the Jews and the Gauls to indicate that the *pax deorum* is returning to the empire. After the Flavian victory, the Senate writes to Vespasian that the whole Roman world had been cleansed by the civil wars (*lustrauerant, uelut expiato terrarum orbe*, 4.3.3). Recently Sailor has argued that Vespasian believed the *lustratio* had not yet been

completed since the Romans were still fighting the Jews. Sailor argues that the Jews were scapegoats and that only their subjugation would end the cycle of violence (Sailor 2008, 237–238). This is an intriguing hypothesis, and there are certainly parallels between the civil war and that with the Jews, but Sailor misrepresents what Vespasian was trying to say in his letter to the Senate. When Vespasian writes as though the war was still going on (*tamquam manente bello*, 4.3.4), Tacitus implies that Vespasian was being respectful of the Senate, which had not yet granted him supreme power. As Sailor admits, the deaths of Otho and Galba could be seen as *deuotiones* (Sailor 2008, 238–239 n. 128). The avenging of Galba and Otho through the death of their rival Vitellius offers a more satisfying conclusion to the civil war than would the destruction of a foreign enemy. For Tacitus, the imminent destruction of Jerusalem does not serve to expiate the civil wars. It indicates that the empire and the principles which govern that empire are regaining stability.

This return to stability can be seen in a final example of *deutio* found in the extant *Histories*. This *deutio* takes place not in a civil war, but during the Batavian Revolt. As *bellum permixtum*, neither civil nor foreign, this war stands between the recent civil war and the external war with the Jews. Haynes summarizes: “[Civilis] embodies the problem facing the Romans of how to reestablish the boundaries of self and other after the trauma of civil war” (2003, 155). One of the Roman generals, Vocola, is forced, like so many other generals in the *Histories*, to deal with mutiny, and, like so many other generals in the *Histories*, Vocola turns to rhetoric. “Vocola’s strategy ... is to emphasize the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ and encourage his men to identify with the right group” (Haynes 2003, 159). He reminds his men of their *Romanitas*, assuring them that the fortune of the empire and the avenging gods (*fortunam imperii et ultores deos*, 4.57.2) are on their side. Vocola rebukes his men and offers himself up for death (4.58.1), preferring to die rather than to see the evil omen (*prodigium*) of Romans serving under Gauls (4.58.5). “Vocola in fact couches his prayer, as Aubrion saw (1985, 632), in the language of a *deutio*” (Keitel 1992a, 329). Vocola’s speech has echoes of the formula of the *deutio* as uttered by Decius at Vesperis (*precor ueneror*, Livy 8.9.7). This language in Tacitus is “almost certainly a direct reminiscence” of Livy (Oakley 1998, 491). Forestalled from committing suicide by his aides, Vocola is killed by a minion of Classicus (4.59.1). Later, Cerialis will avenge Vocola, routing the Gauls “not without divine aid” (*nec sine ope diuina*, 4.78.2). While Vocola’s *deutio* is not as conventional as those of the Decii, Tacitus uses it to show how the balance has been restored. A Roman general has sacrificed himself, been killed by the enemy, and ensured victory

over a more or less foreign army in tandem with the successful generalship of one of his colleagues.

In addition to demonstrating the restoration of the Roman *mos maiorum* in the context of foreign wars, Tacitus uses the imagery of *remedia* to describe the Flavian restoration of Rome. Mucianus serves as a transitional figure between Antonius, the unsuccessful *deuotus* and Flavian scapegoat, and Vespasian himself. Indeed, Tacitus depicts Mucianus as acting more like a partner in power to Vespasian than a minister (*socium magis imperii quam ministrum agens*, 2.83.1; cf. 4.4.1). In dealing with a mutiny of discontented soldiers, Mucianus persuaded some soldiers to retire and dismissed others individually, thus avoiding a mob scene. Tacitus refers to this strategy as the safest remedy (*quo tutissimo remedio*, 4.46.4). “From Tacitus, *tutissimum remedium* is high praise indeed” (Damon 2006, 260). Tacitus also exploits the imagery of *remedia* again when narrating the meeting of the Senate held after the Flavian victory to discuss the financial problems of the state; the consul designate asserts that the matter should be reserved for Vespasian on account of the magnitude of the burden and the difficulty of a remedy (*remedii difficultatem*, 4.9.1). The word *remedium* occurs eight times in the first three books of the *Histories* (1.14.1, 1.20.3, 1.29.1, 1.37.4, 1.63.1, 1.83.1, 2.68.3, 3.54.1). In all of these instances the remedies are ineffective. The word occurs three times in Book 4 (4.9.1, 4.46.4, 4.81.2). These remedies are successful. Unlike previous contenders who had tried to find the *remedium* for the state’s problems but failed, Vespasian is able to consolidate his power and heal Rome’s wounds.

It was common in the annalistic tradition for authors to amass together omens and prodigies at the beginning or end of the year, but in the *Histories* Tacitus incorporates them into integral places throughout the narrative (Morgan 2000, 28–29). Thus, Tacitus waits until after Vespasian’s victory to narrate his miraculous healings in Alexandria (4.81). Vespasian uses both his *fortuna* and *ratio* in the matter. He is reluctant to appear foolish if the attempt fails, but his advisors offer logical explanations as to how Vespasian might heal these men. They persuade him that “this perchance was the will of the gods and that the princeps had been chosen for divine ministry; indeed, the glory of a remedy procured would go to Caesar, the mockery of a vain attempt would fall on the poor wretches” (*id fortasse cordi deis et diuino ministerio principem electum; denique patrati remedii gloriam penes Caesarem, inriti ludibrium penes miseros fore*, 4.81.2). Vespasian, overcoming his reluctance, succeeds in healing these men. Even Tacitus is willing to admit that those who reported the story had no reason to lie (4.81.3).

Tacitus claims that aside from his *auaritia* Vespasian was equal to

the leaders of ancient times (*antiquis ducibus par*, 2.5.1). In the extant books of the *Histories*, Tacitus shows that while the Romans may not always be able to live up to ideals of the republic, they are not as removed from them as one might initially think. By focusing on the concept of *deuotio*, we can see an author many consider to be a pessimist in a more optimistic light. Galba and Otho do not quite measure up to the Decii, but their deaths are not meaningless. Throughout the narrative Tacitus emphasizes the increasingly destructive consequences of these self-sacrificing deaths, contrasting them with the unheroic death of Vitellius. The death of Vitellius fulfills the conditions of the *deuotiones* and brings about, if not immediate peace, at least the end of the war (4.1.1). By portraying Antonius as a failed *deuotus*, Tacitus distances Vespasian from the contagion unleashed by these *deuotiones*, allowing him to pose as the ultimate healer of Rome's ills. Tacitus assures us that the Roman empire is regaining stability by depicting the successful *deuotio* of Vercilla in the context of the war against the Gauls. Tacitus declares in his preface to the *Histories* that his own age can be characterized by the rare felicity of the times when you can think what you wish and say what you think (*rara temporum felicitate, ubi sentire quae velis et quae sentias dicere licet*, 1.1.4). Despite the horrible events of 69 CE, Rome recovered.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

On the subject of *deuotio*, Versnel (1981) remains the touchstone. Oakley (1998, 425–505) provides a useful discussion of the topic in his commentary on the *deuotio* of the elder Decius in Livy. Feldherr (1998) explores in his third chapter the function of *deuotio* in Livy's narrative as a *spectaculum* and *exemplum*. For more on *exempla* in Livy, see Chaplin (2000).

Many scholars have discussed Tacitus' religious beliefs in different contexts, but the most thorough treatments are those of Scott (1968) and Davies (2004). Both of these scholars believe that Tacitus is much more sanguine than he appears to be on the surface. Sage (1991), who examines Tacitus' use of republican imagery, believes that Tacitus uses the past to condemn the present.

The recent commentaries by Damon (2003) on Book 1 and Ash (2007) on Book 2 are useful for both scholar and student. Damon also has appendices (1, 4) which list similarities and differences between Tacitus' narrative and those of Dio, Suetonius, and Plutarch. The commentary of Heubner (1963–1982) on the whole of the *Histories*

has much to offer. Chilver (1979) on Books 1 and 2, Wellesley (1972) on Book 3, and Chilver and Townend (1985) on Books 4 and 5 are historical rather than stylistic commentaries.

Ash (1999) has written the most relevant work for any discussion of the four emperors in 69 CE and their depiction by Tacitus. She especially focuses on the relationships these men had with their soldiers and the factors which played into Vespasian's ultimate success. Haynes (2003) examines Tacitus' narrative techniques in fashioning perspective (*fingere/credere*, "make/believe") in the *Histories*.

Finally, Morgan (2006) has written an account of the civil wars of 69 CE which draws heavily upon Tacitus, taking into account his strengths and weaknesses as a historian.

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Tacitus in the Twenty-First Century

The Struggle for Truth in Annals 1–6

Barbara Levick

What were the first great public events that Tacitus remembered? If he was born in the mid-fifties of the first century (see Birley 2000) they will have been those of the early sixties: at Rome the death of the younger Agrippina and the slow, ill-reported political convulsions that followed, culminating in the end of the influence on Nero of Sex. Afranius Burrus and L. Annaeus Seneca; from abroad he heard of the successes and failures of Rome's conflict with the Parthians. War was the great theme, alongside domestic conflict, that he claimed as the fit subject for annals; the narrow, lowering scope of contemporary politics he deplores (*Ann.* 4.32.2). For both, he had talk of the time and especially his father's dinner-table interpretations. Then came his education: the historians of the republic and early principate, Aufidius Bassus and Servilius Nonianus, to whose accounts he could add what he heard from old men he met (memorably treated by Syme 1958, 469; 1982, 69 = 1988, 202), the orators he heard and read, and the official records. Then in his maturity came the works of the elder Pliny (23 or 24–79 CE), Cluvius Rufus (?d. in Vespasian's reign), and Fabius Rusticus (ca. 30–? after 108; see Cornell et al. forthcoming), all of whom dealt with the events of those boyhood years. Tacitus draws attention to the contradictions between their several accounts, giving his own interpretation and his judgment on the writers' credibility (*Ann.* 13.20.2–4), and it may be that these events and contemporary interpretations of them had a particularly profound effect on the future historian, even if he was with his father the procurator on official business in the provinces.

During the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, scholarly inquiry into Tacitus' work, with the impetus it had from the

work of Syme, has focused on the independence of narrative art, on rhetoric, on irony and misreading, on make-believe, on political and literary careers, and the like (e.g., Ginsburg 1981; Woodman 1988; O’Gorman 2000; Haynes 2003; Sailor 2008). Students of non-verbal Roman institutions, such as the triumph (e.g., notably Beard 2007), have illuminated them by applying sociological and anthropological theory to their actions and presentations. There is good reason for using theory, literary and other, in interpreting literary work, especially work as saturated in rhetoric as Roman history writing was – as long as we are sure in each case, if we can be, whether the actors in the triumph and writers of the histories were fully conscious of what has been retrieved by modern scholars, half-conscious of it, or wholly unconscious. As O’Gorman has it, “Saying that the mutiny episodes are ‘really’ about the mutinies ... doesn’t necessarily preclude me from reading them as a metaphor for reading” (2000, 26). The new techniques were in part a reaction against earlier preoccupations with “accuracy” and “bias” and attempts to tease out of Tacitus’ narrative and those of other writers such as Velleius Paterculus, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio a true account of the events they cover. At their crudest some of these earlier critiques were attempts to “rescue” the emperors that Tacitus treats, notably Tiberius and Claudius. It is the discovery of new documents such as the *Tabulae Hebana* and *Siarensis* (Crawford 1996, 1, no. 37f.) and the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone patre* (Eck et al. 1996; with Griffin 1997; Barnes 1998; Damon 1999; and Talbert 1999) that has kept such studies alive, at least for points of detail. Nonetheless, there has also been a further reaction. Bosworth (2003) put up a vigorous defense of ancient historians as truth seekers, and he has been vigorously supported by Atkinson (2009, 32–35). Whatever the stories he found in Herodotus, Cicero knew that truth was what history aimed at (*de Orat.* 2.62). Even in an age when history writing was in decline, the ancients were still amenable to the idea of aiming at the truth, *to alethes* (as opposed to flattering prominent men), as Lucian, the admirer of Thucydides, puts it in his *How to Write History*.

But something more fundamental than fashion and a proper detestation of autocrats has driven late twentieth-century studies in Tacitus. It is skepticism not about ancient historians but about history writing itself. What is the truth that I shall follow Bosworth, Atkinson, and others in claiming as the prime aim of historians, even ancient ones, notably Tacitus? It is not only that ancient historians were cavalier: truth is not to be had at all. It is something, evidently, that it is now naïve to pursue: Gruen, in his introduction to Ginsburg’s study of Agrippina, praises her for not becoming “mired in a fruitless search for the elusive historical ‘truth’ ” (Ginsburg 2006, 6; cf. Haynes 2003,

13, 28–32). There are good reasons for his skepticism, one obvious – shortage of evidence. More serious is the fact that history necessarily comes through the medium of words, and that puts the reader at the mercy of the narrator and his guile; and even a guileless narrator may make mistakes or mislead unwittingly. Yet if we are not demanding blemish-free perfection, truth does seem to be attainable. It is what is achieved at the end of detective stories – though they are fiction. It is also sought in courts of law – a true verdict, unimpaired by ignorance or guile. This to be sure is something far less complex than history, and there is also human input, that of the pledged “good men and women true.” It is not something impersonal but is what individuals can pledge with their troth, which others will accept. Even if a verdict proves to be mistaken (some new piece of evidence appears) it is still true in the sense that the jury has kept its pledge. It is replaced by one that is closer to the truth that will be universally acknowledged. It is surely possible to permit (mentally) the many changes and fluctuations and revisions caused by varieties of perception (others’ and one’s own) that continue endlessly to be reproduced, and to proceed steadily with one’s own fix on truth.

Truth cannot be a mere exposition of “the facts.” Certainly, etymology gives the word “fact” status as something actually “done,” and its weakness, that a claim such as “it is a fact that ...” carries with it a subordinate clause presenting the statement of an individual, is shared by the claim “it is the truth that ...,” although this seems to bring with it the weight of the speaker’s personal assurance. “Facts” are assorted items that have to be connected up; they only make up the truth. It is better to eschew that word and use the neutral and more accommodating “material” (what one gets to work on), which will readily include art, inscriptions, and coins as well as the assertions of earlier writers. Fluid thinking can retrieve past opinions and regenerate them.

Tacitus makes statements, not only the programmatic announcement at the beginning of *Annals* (1.1.3) but in the third book (3.65.1), that seem to imply concern with truth, but both have suffered under modern scrutiny. In the first passage, after noting that “the affairs of Tiberius and Gaius, as of Claudius and Nero, were falsified from dread while the men themselves flourished, and composed with hatred fresh after their fall,” Tacitus goes on: “Hence my plan is the transmission of a mere few things about Augustus and of his final period, then of Tiberius’ principate and the remainder – without anger and partiality, reasons for which I keep at a distance” (*inde consilium mihi pauca de Augusto et extrema tradere, mox Tiberii principatum et cetera, sine ira et studio, quorum causas procul habeo*, 1.1.3. For the *Annals* I use the scholarly translation of Woodman

2004). However, the grand statement seems less significant when it is taken into account that the only reasons given for misrepresentation are benefactions and punishments disbursed by emperors contemporary with the authors. Tacitus had made a similar comment on early imperial historians at the opening of the *Histories* (1.1.1), in connection with “damage to truthfulness” (*ueritas ... infracta*). Moreover, it was conventional for historians from Thucydides onwards to claim superior authority for what they were about to offer, Thucydides (1.21) using the word *akribēia*, “exactness.” Tacitus, having read all these claims, including Seneca’s parody of them in the *Apocolocyntosis* (1.1), knew what to make of them and could make his own, even tongue-in-cheek (see Martin 1981, 242); for the notion that it was only present gifts or acts of cruelty to the historian himself that affected him was clearly absurd. What was done to earlier generations, to his own ancestors, or to institutions he cherished, was surely hardly less important in engaging his sympathies or alienating him.

Yet that may be just the point. Tacitus is making the claim that historians are indeed immune, or should be, to what has happened in the past: their judgment must be impartial. In the *Histories* he had gone on to distinguish two phases of his own life: Galba, Otho, and Vitellius had done him neither good nor harm (*nec beneficio nec iniuria*); it was Vespasian who had begun his advancement, and the other Flavians had taken it further, but, he continues, “partiality and hatred toward any man are equally inappropriate in a writer who claims to be honest and reliable” (*incorruptam fidem professis; neque amore ... et sine odio*, *Hist.* 1.1.3; the translation is that of Wellesley 1982). The effort is already apparent, even when an emperor has had no dealings with the writer. In the *Annals* 1.1.3, Woodman rightly translates the last phrase as “any reasons for which I keep at a distance,” bringing out the effort that was necessary, even for the epigone historian. Elsewhere Tacitus also uses such phrases with *procul* literally or metaphorically with the same sense of effort (*Ann.* 2.48.2, 67.2; 4.62.2, with the comment of Woodman 1998b, 153; 6.32.1; 14.31.10). The phrase here does not mean simply that Tacitus, through his late date of birth, happened not to be burdened with the same problems as his predecessors in the field.

In any case is a cliché (if that is what this is) to be dismissed? It offers a model, whether or not all authors follow it. Tacitus must have known the famous story recounted by the younger Pliny in one of his *Letters* (9.19.5). The eminent statesman L. Verginius Rufus, three times consul, reproached Cluvius Rufus with his account of the part that Verginius had played in the year of the four emperors, 69. Cluvius’ response was that Verginius knew what *fides* (trustworthiness) was

due to history. It was the knockdown answer. The irony (not brought out by Pliny) was that neither man was blameless: Verginius had been lucky to survive 69 and had only done so by some adroit spinning of official history, sanctioned by succeeding emperors; Tacitus knew, as we have already seen, that Cluvius' own work was not unchallengeable. He had the standard to apply.

For a second celebrated passage on Tacitus' declared aims we have the detailed analysis of Woodman (1998a, 86–103), who translates it as follows: "Recounting proposals [made in the Senate] has not been my established practice, except those distinguished by honourableness or of noteworthy discredit, which I deem to be a principal responsibility of Annals, to prevent virtues from being silenced and so that crooked words and deeds should be attended by the dread of posterity and infamy" (*Exsequi sententias haud institui nisi insignes per honestum aut notabili dedecore, quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne uirtutes sileantur utque prauis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus sit*, Ann. 3.65.1; cf. 14.64.3). In a note to his translation Woodman draws attention to the fact that most other interpreters understand Tacitus to be saying "... because I deem the greatest function of history to be that virtues should not be silenced and that crooked words and deeds should be attended by dread from posterity and infamy." His paper, however, delivers elaborate and telling arguments to show that their understanding of the sentence (construction, convention, and context) is unsatisfactory, the crux of the difficulty lying in the two interpretations of the word *quod*, relative pronoun or subordinating conjunction.

The main difficulty with Woodman's own interpretation is that it makes Tacitus claim that the differentiation of *sententiae* delivered in the Senate is "a principal responsibility" of annals, when that was only one of the fields in which merit and demerit were displayed, battle being the most obvious. It was not the place for *praua facta* to be displayed either, though Tacitus goes on directly at the beginning of 3.66 to say that the Senate passed from the discreditable to the destructive, specifying the trial of C. Silanus for misgovernment of Asia and the charges of disloyalty also brought against him. Second, it is a supplementary argument of the paper that the sentence, retrospective in its sense, refers back chiastically to the debates on Drusus' tribunician power (3.57) and the discussion of the asylum rights of Greek cities (3.60–63). This is not convincing: the two sections are not balanced in length and the "freedom" allowed the Senate in the latter was only a pretence (*simulacrum*). Nor is anything striking said during the discussion that would have been worth Tacitus' recording in detail. For these reasons I should revert to the older interpretation of 3.65.1, translating "I have not made it a

practice to track opinions expressed in the Senate except those that were remarkable for their integrity or those whose unworthiness deserved noting, *because* I regard it as the prime function of annals to prevent acts of courage being left unmentioned and to ensure that for wicked words and deeds there awaits the fear of ill repute with a later generation.” The *ne ... ut* clauses explain and complete the word “function” (*munus*), as an infinitive does in a passage of the *Digest* (Ulpian, 21.1.14.1) and as a relative clause explains it in *Ann.* 14.55.1.

This “conventional” interpretation of the sentence (while Woodman, with careful comparison with the programs of Sallust and Livy, denies that the exemplary function of historiography is in question in this passage) introduces another strand in Tacitus’ historical thinking: the didactic, one persistent in historical writing since Herodotus and very strong in Roman historiography, notably in Sallust and Livy (see Earl 1961; Chaplin 2000). Understandable appeals to Livy’s preface (10) have not persuaded Woodman or Luce (1991, 2914), who sharply distinguishes Tacitus’ idea that history can act as a deterrent from Livy’s claim that history teaches [the general reader] by example: Tacitus is concerned with prominent individuals likely to be featured in the pages of history. The principle however looks similar.

As Woodman points out, this strand is visible elsewhere, in *Annals* 4.33.2, where the historian is expounding his duties, and implicitly at 14.64.3: “Whoever becomes acquainted with the misfortunes of those [Neronian] times ... may hold the presumption that, whenever the *princeps* ordered exile and slaughter, ... gratitude was expressed to the gods... . And yet we shall not be silent if any Senate’s decision was novel in its sycophancy or unsurpassable in its passivity.” Despite an author’s danger of exaggerating, in the style of Soviet sculpture, the magnitude of the men and events to be memorialized in the process of teaching the reader, teaching is not a function necessarily inconsistent with truthfulness. We have also to remember (despite the writer’s humor, repeatedly stressed by Syme) how seriously Tacitus took his task. He spurns trivia as alien to the weight of history (*procul grauitate* in *Hist.* 2.50.2) and presents himself as a physician (Hammer 2008, 145; could anything be more serious?) who wants to diagnose the malady of despotism (*Ann.* 4.32.2). Didacticism correlates with something else: a strong belief in the responsibility of individuals for historical change: no recourse to trends, no sociological analysis is allowed to shift responsibility from the shoulders of members of the Senate and above all of the *princeps*.

Tacitus’ truth (for, as we have seen, it had to be his truth) must be something that he could commit himself to. If he cared for it, he knew that his path to it was not straightforward. Tacitus’ methods of

research have been thoroughly examined and only two points need be made here. First, embracing all matters that could not be checked by reference to the *acta*, we have Tacitus' proclamation that when his literary sources agreed he followed them, distinguishing them only when there was a divergence (*Ann.* 4.10). Embarrassment is the modern reaction, but there is no sign that Tacitus was uneasy at confessing that he was at the mercy of his predecessors and of material they unanimously gave him. Second, his use of state records, especially the *acta senatus*: without going so far as to claim the *acta* as the or even a "main source" (so Syme 1982), it seems clear that he routinely consulted it on public transactions. He mentions almost in passing that Acilius Glabrio proposed a temple for Nero after the detection of the conspiracies of 65 and 66 (*Ann.* 15.74.3) and his declaration of 3.65.2 shows that he could have tracked *sententiae* at length. That remark comes precisely in the tract of the *Annals* that covers the periods between the trial of Cn. Piso senior and the death of Tiberius' now undisputed heir Drusus Caesar, in which the political scene looked settled. Intrigue and conspiracy were in abeyance, the organs of state could function along traditional lines, and private feuds take their course. Here in Book 3, also offering a telling lull before the storm that the death of the heir brought up, Tacitus displays them under full sail, and that perhaps is why his disclaimer about tracking them right through is appropriate: even in this lull the imperial presence could be exploited as it exacerbated the fate of a miscreant provincial governor, C. Silanus. As to his claim to have searched the *acta publica* to find the public role played in Germanicus' obsequies by his mother Antonia, or rather her absence (*Ann.* 3.3.2), that should be taken seriously too, though Tacitus did not qualify what he said by any reference to her part in choosing the honors to be paid to his memory, attested in the *Tabula Siarensis* that carries the Lex Valeria Cornelia of 20 CE (Crawford 1996, 1, no. 37, p. 515 l.7). Failure to make the inquiry would have invited ridicule from any scholarly researcher such as Suetonius.

Rather, Tacitus' main difficulties (pointed out by O'Gorman 2000 as never before) and his opportunities lay in interpreting literary and documentary material in the clouded atmosphere of an inefficient despotism constructed on the base of a rivalrous, unscrupulous, and voluble aristocracy. "So it is that all the greatest matters are ambiguous, inasmuch as some people hold any form of hearsay as confirmed, others turn truth into its converse, and each swells among posterity" (3.19.2). Unofficial stories were full of bias and mutually contradictory, official versions embodied in the senatorial minutes (what was inscribed on coins was meager and not eloquent enough to be counted) were blatantly spun. And like any scientist he started out

with ideas that he had to test and – if he were attached to them – defend. Two such ideas predominated: emperors were bent on autocracy, especially Tiberius, who took over at a time after the death of the founder when autocracy could still have been checked; then the great majority of senators colluded in its imposition, some actively promoting it in their own interest.

Some conflicts could not be resolved even in his own mind, and yet the history had to be written: there was work to be done. Hence the delicate tread and the insistent presence of the author breathing behind the reader's head, often at moments of difficulty; hence the refuge taken in ironies in the face of insoluble political riddles; the covert sympathy with a politician (Tiberius) who himself had failed to deal with them, revealed in treatment of the man's speeches (Miller 1956); and above all the notorious leaving of choices open to his reader, inveigling them into making their own usually unfavorable, usually second, interpretations. So often does Tacitus do this and so thoroughly has the practice been catalogued and discussed (Ryberg 1942, especially 384 and 404; Whitehead 1979, who is objective; Develin 1983, offering an unrelenting and virulent catalogue) that Tacitus seems to stand condemned. This important feature of his style needs discussing for this very reason, and there are larger items of puzzlement to examine, some involving misinterpretation on the part of Tacitus himself, that have attracted less attention than briefer, more epigrammatic and striking examples.

Develin, intent on assembling his catalogue of items of which "it would be dangerous to assume that the usage is innocent or indicative of Tacitus' respect for uncertainty in history" (1983, 68) is not forthcoming on motivation, although "there is much of the annalistic poseur in Tacitus" (1983, 69). According to Ryberg, the innuendos "serve a consistent purpose": they are "the resources employed by Tacitus the artist to produce an impression for which Tacitus the historian is not willing to take the responsibility" (Ryberg 1942, 384). Yet the basis of this is simply the fact that Tacitus himself cannot be certain of the truth. So it is with his explanation for the obscurity of Tiberius' language, nature or nurture; not much is gained for a sinister portrait: "Tiberius'" words, even on matters which he was not for concealing, were, whether by nature or habit (*seu natura siue adsuetudine*, 1.11.2), always weighed and dark; again, on relations between Tiberius and his mother, how long they were on good terms – or hid their enmity: *sincera adhuc ... concordia, siue occultis odiis* (3.64.1). Sometimes the two views are ascribed to different contemporary groups, as when Tiberius exempts Drusus Caesar, consul designate, from pronouncing his verdict first: "an action which some deemed citizenlike, to save the rest from agreement, but which others

attributed to savagery, he would not have withdrawn Drusus except from the responsibility of condemning” (3.22.4). In such cases we are forced to decide whether Tacitus’ report of men’s opinions is authentic or whether he has made it up. This is a heavy responsibility on the modern historian when the accusation against Tiberius is so plausible and the woman on trial, Aemilia Lepida, so much favored by aristocratic and public opinion. It would have been strange for these alternatives not to present themselves to contemporaries.

Ryberg also remarks that specimens of innuendo decrease in number after the first hexad (doubted by Develin 1983, 89 and 94, holding the technique to be the essence of Tacitus’ method). The later books, she argues, are where the accepted historical tradition was in harmony with Tacitus’ personal bias. With Tiberius, on the other hand, Tacitus found the “tyrant” concept ready to hand, and it fitted his idea of the development of the principate, but “it failed to agree with recorded facts” (Ryberg 1942, 404). Tacitus was in a series of quandaries. Or rather, to take the problem that Tacitus faced back to Tiberius’ contemporaries, when the principate had settled down into its series of unsatisfactory Julio-Claudian emperors, there was less room for controversy among contemporaries and doubt in the mind of Tacitus. As Whitehead concludes, “We the readers are led to make our choices under the subliminal influence of that *ira et studium* which he the historian abjured” (1979, 495).

From examples of major interest I take first one that has been illuminated as part-subject of Woodman’s profound analysis of the obituary of Tiberius (6.51.1–3): the description of Tiberius in a subordinate clause as devoted to Sejanus or afraid of him (*intestabilis saeuitia sed obtectis libidinibus dum Seianum dilexit timuitue*, 6.51.3). The alternatives here relate in miniature to the most obdurate problem that Tacitus faced in his inquiry into the development of the principate: the truth about Tiberius (the responsibility of senators being on plain display).

Woodman does not interpret the obituary as most commentators have done (for the bibliography of the passage, see Woodman 1998a: 157, especially at n. 10, and citing Hands 1974, and Gill 1983 as shaking the interpretation). It is not the gradual revelation of an unchanging core, but the account of the inadequate and dependent Tiberius’ successive losses of his partners in power, so that in the last phase he had only his own *ingenium* to rely on, not other people’s (*suo tantum ingenio utebatur*, 6.51.3); *ingenium* has nothing to do with character, only with behavior. Hence there is no immutability of character to contrast puzzlingly with the judgment of L. Arruntius in 6.48.2; and Sejanus is not, implausibly, made to be a restraining influence on Tiberius, the ruin of whose principate he initiated at the

beginning of Book 4. He only prevented the open practice of Tiberius' sexual vices: in the final period he broke out into *dedecora* as well as the *scelera* that belong to his *saeuitia*. Precisely, then, Tiberius' affection for Sejanus fostered his *saeuitia*, while his fear forced him to cover up his *libidines*; and accordingly Woodman translates "infamous for his savagery, but with his lusts cloaked, inasmuch as he felt love or fear respectively for Sejanus" (6.51.3).

The question arises, however, of exactly what Tiberius feared from Sejanus if he did *not* cloak his lusts. Surely not a moral lecture. Tiberius' conduct when he acted against Sejanus shows that he was indeed afraid – of being violently overthrown (Suet., *Tib.* 65; Dio 58.13.1). The key words are "with his shame and dread removed" (*remoto pudore et metu*), that is, the external and internalized restraints imposed by the authority of kith and kin: Tiberius had had to preserve decorum. As far as his last associate was concerned Tacitus was uncertain whether the motivating factor was Tiberius' affection for Sejanus or that fear that was certainly present at the end and may have been with him for months before. There were signs of caution even in his response to Sejanus' request for the hand of Drusus Caesar's widow in 25 (4.40). We do not know what pressure Sejanus applied to obtain his consulship in 30. Keenly aware of his own unpopularity, the ruler had to rely on his Guard Prefect – until he came to believe that the more immediate threat came from that quarter. As to the contradiction between the obituary and the puzzlement of Arruntius, the puzzlement belongs to Arruntius and not to Tacitus, who offers him an answer three chapters later (so Hands 1974, 314).

The reader encounters multifarious ambiguity when Tacitus introduces the first specimens of trials for diminishing the *maiestas* of the Roman people, or rather of the *princeps* and his family, in 15 CE (*Ann.* 1.72–74). Such trials for *maiestas* proper need to be distinguished (but are not always so distinguished, certainly not explicitly by Tacitus) from the hasty dealings with alleged conspirators such as Libo Drusus in 16 CE (*Ann.* 2.27–32), but both figure largely as symptoms in the deterioration of the principate down to the reign of Domitian. This episode of 15, then, is the basis of a key passage, as Tacitus intimates at its opening, when he offers a brief history of the charge, and at the close, when he hints at what was to come. Just where clarity and decisiveness were vital, the narrative presents a succession of difficulties, inherent in Tacitus' language and to be elucidated, if at all, only by following the apparent course of several events.

First, Tiberius "had brought back" (*reduxerat*, 1.72.2) the law of treason. That phrase, the source of innumerable discussions, is not

problematic in itself, as Tacitus' little history of the charge makes clear: there had been cases under Augustus, but the last months of 14 were innocent of them (indeed, no cases of *maiestas* proper are known since Cassius Severus, whom he names, was exiled in 12 at the latest, 1.72.3, cf. 4.21.3). Tacitus lays the onus for the reintroduction of the law of treason on Tiberius, telescoping two series of events. His narrative shows that a praetor, Pompeius Macer, who would be in charge of a jury court, was asking whether one should be convened to try such cases (*an iudicia redderentur*, 1.73.2 with the accurate comment of Furneaux 1896, *ad loc.*). Woodman (2004) renders "whether legal proceedings would be allowed in cases of treason," but that would allow for proceedings in the Senate; *iudicia* means the regular jury courts (cf. *an iudicia maiestatis cogi iuberet*, "whether he was to order courts for *maiestas* to be summoned," Suet., *Tib.* 58). Suetonius does not trouble with the context. If this has not always been understood, that is not Tacitus' fault: readers have had their minds on the issue in general, not on petty differences. Tiberius made his (in)famous reply, also recorded and exploited in Suetonius' biography, that "the laws were to be put into effect" (1.72.3).

There is a minor but highly significant ambiguity here. Tacitus and Suetonius use the verbs *consulto* and *consulo*, respectively, both in the ablative absolute construction: *consultante ... praetore/consulente praetore*, and Tiberius replies. Clearly this scene takes place in public, in the Senate. It is far from clear, however, that Macer addresses his inquiry to Tiberius (as Woodman's translation has it); rather, as the verb *consulto* in particular suggests (see the entry in Gerber and Greef 1903, s.v.), he is putting a question to the Senate as a whole, as Tiberius did in 14 when they were to discuss the obsequies of Augustus (1.7.4; cf. Livy 39.49.1; *CIL* 1.581.1; Tac., *Dial.* 13.6). Either an ongoing debate in the House prompted it, treating the anonymous or pseudonymous attacks on nobles and Tiberius' haughtiness and his bad relations with his mother, which Tacitus mentions as provoking him too (*quoque*), or an actual attempted prosecution. The answer in Tacitus and Suetonius comes from Tiberius. Even so, his role was hardly an active one: laws *were* to be put into effect and could not be willfully repealed or neglected, especially if they had been enacted or modified by Augustus, though Cowan (2009) has shown how Tiberius manipulated attention to Augustus. We do not know either how much discussion came first. Tacitus has pushed the Senate into the background.

At any rate nothing more is heard of such a prosecution. It could have been heard in the praetor's court and involved defendants who were not eminent enough to be dealt with in the senatorial pseudo-court that Augustus had initiated; these were the people who had

slandered Tiberius and his mother, if they were indeed brought to justice. The notice that Tacitus takes of Tiberius' reply shows how anxious he, and perhaps his source, was to ferret out the origins of the practice of bringing *maiestas* charges. (Whether Suetonius found the phrase in Tacitus or another (common?) source is unclear.) Candor, however, led him to point up the part played by Augustus: the extension of the charge to cover verbal offenses. He fails to pinpoint the other and major contributory factor: Augustus' transfer of important trials to the Senate. That is natural: its new quasi-judicial functions had become a treasured prerogative of the Senate, and when the *princeps* (notably Claudius) began to hold "trials" in private (*intra cubiculum*) they resented it.

In a second act of the *maiestas* drama, without noting any change of scene from a *quaestio* presided over by Macer, Tacitus proceeds to the first, experimental, trials of two knights. These trials surely took place in the Senate, *modici* though the accused were (one of them was nonetheless grand enough to have established a troop of *cultores Augusti* in his house). At the end of the third case, that of Granius Marcellus, Tacitus says that Tiberius was not sated by (plural) trials held in the Senate, but interfered in the praetor's courts as well.

Tacitus prefaces the knights' trials with the comment that his purpose is "to become acquainted with the initial phases from which, given the degree of Tiberius' skill, a form of extermination of the utmost severity crept in, was then suppressed, and finally flared up and gripped everything" (1.73.1). Tiberius was absent from these first trials, but on learning the charges (the employment of an actor of ill repute among the *cultores*, the sale of a statue of Augustus among other garden furniture, and perjury on an oath taken by Augustus), he wrote to the consuls disallowing them. This, and perhaps the ensuing acquittal of Granius, evidently represents the "suppression"; the following phrases leave it unclear what the time limits and trajectory were for the development of *maiestas*: from the death of Tiberius in 37 to that of Domitian in 96.

The dénouement to which Tacitus is hastening comes in Act Three. The next accused, Granius Marcellus, was governor of Bithynia in 14–15 CE. Faithful to his main theme, Tacitus mentions only in a clause appended to the end of the episode that Marcellus was also charged with misgovernment. Tacitus' account of the proceedings against Marcellus is ambiguous or misleading on at least three points. The first concerns the identity of the leading and subsidiary prosecutors, Caepio Crispinus (Marcellus' quaestor) and Romanus Hispo. Tacitus appends a denunciation of one of them. It is unclear which is meant; if it is Hispo, as the vitriolic description of such a man as "needy, nameless, and restless" (1.74.2) suggests (the leading counsel was

already an ex-quaestor), his name and the denunciation might be an insertion, made when Tacitus revised his text, but Crispinus as the main prosecutor should be receiving most attention. One of the two (presumably Crispinus, since Hispo is given the next charge) is then said to have accused Marcellus of defaming Tiberius; the charge was believed because the slanders fitted Tiberius' real behavior. The next puzzle then concerns Tiberius' reaction to Hispo's additional accusation that Marcellus had sited his own statue higher than those of the Caesars and that on another he had removed the head of a statue of Augustus and replaced it with one of Tiberius. "At this (*ad quod*) Tiberius flared up to such an extent that, shattering his taciturnity, he announced that he too would express an opinion in the case, openly and on oath, so that the same constraint should apply to the others" (1.74.3). The problem over Hispo leaves it uncertain whether it was the defamation or the treatment of the statues or the combination that made Tiberius burst out: if all the material referring to Hispo is an insertion, then it was the defamation. But it was more probably the combined charges: the subsequent acquittal covered both. Worse, it is unclear how the outburst is to be taken, fury at the offense, or fury at the charge. The bearing of Tacitus' narrative makes it sufficiently clear that he saw Tiberius enraged by the offense: it was only the intervention of a senior consular, a friend, who mitigated his rage. For Cn. Piso, Tiberius' colleague in the consulship of 7 BCE, demonstrating traces of dying freedom, asked when Tiberius would vote, first or last. There is perfect justification for Woodman's translation: "Shaken by these words, and passive from penitence at having boiled over too incautiously, he allowed the defendant to be released from the charges of treason; the question of extortion went to the recoverers" (1.74.6). Uncertainty remains, though, how Tiberius responded to Piso's challenge and in what position he did vote, if he voted at all; who would have been the senator (properly a consul designate) bold enough to take the initiative in moving for acquittal in a case of *maiestas*? For this reason I prefer a variant translation: "... with a submissiveness that matched his unguarded outburst he carried a motion that the defendant should be acquitted of the charges of *maiestas*." This interpretation of *tulit absolui* is sanctioned by Furneaux (1896, *ad loc.*), and it shows Tiberius taking Piso's advice: he did vote first, giving Piso his guidance, presumably on oath, and for acquittal. His indignation was caused by the triviality of the charges; he had shown the same indifference to offenses of this kind in the opening cases against the two knights. (It was not to last.) The ambiguity in *tulit* is so blatant that it must be asked if Tacitus did not intend the word to bear both its meanings. However, there is no ambiguity in his reporting of the fact of Tiberius' outburst. It is pertinent to ask what

Tacitus' source was. If it was the minutes of the Senate, Tacitus had only unadorned dialogue to work on, and his own interpretation of the words has conjured up Tiberius' angry, then shamefaced, responses. It is unlikely, though, that he was the first historian to deal with this pivotal scene. Tacitus had predecessors (see Martin 1981, 199–207); M. Servilius Nonianus, consul 35 CE, a historian whom he respected, and a hostile witness to Tiberius' principate, would be an obvious candidate (Syme 1964; Cornell et al. forthcoming, no. 092).

Tacitus' account of these transactions is unsatisfactory, as to the Augustan origin of the senatorial court, the site of the trials, the participants, the timing of their long-term outcome, and, most blatantly, Tiberius' involvement. That is due not to difficulties he had with the material, much of it on public record, but to the pull of the narrative and those who had handled it previously and the need for an account that would fit Tacitus' hypothesis, his truth, and take him satisfactorily to the downfall of the tyrant Nero: the inherent villainy of Tiberius. For, in Griffin's words, "[Tacitus] presented what he thought about the Augustan principate as a system, in terms of the deliberate intentions of the *princeps*, thus translating abstract ideas about the falsity and oppression of the form of government Augustus had created into the more dramatic portrayal of the hypocrisy and tyranny of his unfortunate successor" (1995, 33). And, as she concludes, "for Tacitus there were only two sorts of explanation for historical events" (1995, 56 f., citing *Ann.* 4.20.3): that is, chance or human will.

The same factors are at work a few chapters further on, at the end of the book (1.81). As Woodman comments: "The whole of this paragraph is extremely obscure and has generated an enormous amount of scholarly discussion" (2004, 41 n. 106). Tacitus reports on the first consular elections of the reign. They are misplaced here, for the consular elections of 14 had already taken place before Augustus died on August 19 and we need not suppose that they were delayed in the following year (for ends of year see Ginsburg 1981, 31–52.) The displacement is due to their significance, which is obvious: Tacitus had opened his work precisely by juxtaposing the collegiate consulship, with its limited term of service, to the monarchy that had originally (or, "from the start") held Rome: it embodied freedom and it was opposed to the lifelong sole principate of the new dispensation. Tacitus makes it clear that he has examined the consular elections under Tiberius, studying his predecessors and paying particular attention to the utterances and conduct of the *princeps*. Here again there was much on public record, the *acta senatus* (for elections were now effectively held in the Senate) and the speeches of the emperor, whether preserved in the *acta* or (less probably, with such routine

material) published as part of a collection. More than once Tacitus complains of the obscurity of Tiberius' speeches: they were meant for interpretation.

Tacitus distinguishes three practices. First, sometimes Tiberius would let his views on the candidates be known without mentioning their names. This is not as absurd as it seems: the technique is familiar in Latin oratory from Cicero onwards, perhaps most famously in the emperor Claudius' speech on the admission of northern Gallic chieftains to the Senate. Vividly vilifying a recent conspirator from Vienna, Claudius refrains from naming him (Smallwood 1967, no. 369). In his *Achievements* (the *Res Gestae Diui Augusti*), Augustus never mentions the names of Brutus, Cassius, Sex. Pompeius, or Antony and Cleopatra. Here however, the motive is delicacy, to avoid giving a candidate over-emphatic support or unduly bruising the *princeps* considered unworthy. Second, sometimes he would make no comment at all but simply warn candidates not to let electoral irregularity disturb the vote, promising that if they did he would not let it pass. Woodman (2004) translates: "He urged candidates not to disrupt the elections by canvassing and guaranteed that he would give the matter his personal attention" (1.81.2). Yet it would be unreasonable to prevent candidates from mere canvassing; *ambitus*, which included bribery, had been an offense since 181 BCE (Livy 40.19.11). "The matter" (*id*) is precisely misconduct of that kind, the content of the subordinate clause, as a pupil, Pamela Fairweather, pointed out to me many years ago.

Third, "Generally he announced that only those had registered with him whose names he had given to the consuls; others too could register if they felt confidence in their favor or merits – yet this was mere verbal display, empty of substance (or deceptive) and, the more impressive its covering in the image of freedom, poised to erupt in an all the more ferocious servitude" (1.81.2). We need not be concerned with the mechanics of the procedure here: it is clear that there was a list of candidates that had reached the consuls (the returning officers) and that it was restricted in numbers, perhaps even coinciding with the number of places available. Tacitus places a particularly sinister interpretation on this: the freedom that the consulship had once brought was now an illusion (even when the office was overshadowed by the principate itself). It was all to end, precisely, in slavery. Woodman explains what Tacitus means by "empty" and "deceptive": "The offer was assumed to be insincere and hence not taken up" and "if the offer was taken at face value and acted upon, the candidates would fail to be elected" (Woodman 2004, 41 n. 107). However, a truer explanation than Tacitus offers comes to hand when Cassius Dio describes how Gaius Caligula in 37 tried to return elections from the

Senate to the people. He found a deficiency of candidates, making the elections a sham. Candidates were doing deals between themselves beforehand to avoid the wearisomeness of canvassing (and bribery, of course): for example, a candidate with strong support might persuade another, less confident candidate to desist from standing on the understanding that the less confident candidate could expect support for a subsequent year. Two years later Caligula returned to the Augusto-Tiberian system of pre-election in the Senate (Dio 59.20.4). Although informal intervention by the *princeps* is never to be ruled out and his support throughout a career would virtually guarantee election to the consulship, it seems clear that candidates were already making the deals that Dio records. In other words, the names that Tiberius found on his list might well equate to the places available (two on each occasion), and he would have to pass them on as they were, adding his invitation to other candidates to stand, which was indeed futile, as the election was already stitched up, but not deceitful on Tiberius' part; he must have known what had been going on, and could not intervene.

It was this third procedure, misunderstood by a man writing at a time when conditions had changed, that justifies Tacitus' outburst. First, the merest hint of imperial favor was sufficient to secure a place; second, there were now far more consulships available: normally six pairs a year, not the four of 15 CE, with the suffectships held in the last two months being proportionally the least prestigious. The number of consulships was only four fewer than the number of praetorships. The tightly arranged elections of the Tiberian principate were no longer possible. Again, Tacitus has allowed his prime concerns, to explain the decline of the Senate and to attribute it to the malice of an individual, to deceive him into distorting the course of events and changes in institutions.

Tiberius is the great deceiver. It is an only-too-familiar theme how Tacitus, in the interest of this concern, exploited the concept of *dissimulatio*, hypocrisy, to cope with such declarations on the part of his villain. He was not the first, and in a sense this became a *folie à deux*, for Tiberius had indeed practiced *dissimulatio* in many of its forms and teased men with the fact for all his life by the prudent concealment of feelings, even the innocent betrayal of natural as opposed to formal grief, which would have been seen as a sign of weakness, a lack of the manliness that being a Roman demanded. Derived from that was his use of irony as a rhetorical tool – *eironeia* in Greek, *dissimulatio* in Latin – which enabled him sometimes to sublimate and even to turn into humor anger that he would have considered justified. The characteristic was known, probably notorious, among his contemporaries, and that is its ultimate origin in

Tacitus. For it is reported in the senatorial decree of 19–20 that prescribed the honors to be paid to the deceased Germanicus Caesar that Tiberius admitted that he could not conceal (*dissimulare*) his grief. We might even be permitted to see a specimen of his humor (*dissimulatio*) in this very piece, in spite of the solemnity of the occasion: was Tiberius not notorious for mingling the serious and the frivolous? One remarkable specimen of Tiberius' use of *eironeia*, again quoted verbatim in Tacitus and, with almost the same words, in Suetonius and perhaps also to be credited to the historical work of Nonianus, is his "cry from the heart" of 32 CE: "If I know what to write to you, conscript fathers, or how to write or what not to write at all at this time, may the gods and goddesses destroy me worse than the daily death I feel" (6.6.2; Suet., *Tib.* 67.1). This was the opening of a letter in which Tiberius "in the manner of a defense, rehearsed the beginning of the friendship between himself and Cotta and recollected the latter's frequent services, demanding that perversely twisted words and the frankness of dinner-party stories should not be scaled to the level of a crime" (6.5.2). He concludes by asserting that "not without wisdom did the most outstanding man of wisdom [Plato] customarily affirm that, if the minds of tyrants could be opened up, mutilations and blows would be visible. ... In Tiberius' case neither his fortune nor his solitude protected him from admitting the tortures of his soul and his own punishments" (6.6.2).

So much for the arch-dissimulator. What was the occasion for this abject and revealing confession? Attacks on a friend, to be brushed aside: a series of charges brought against M. Aurelius Cotta Maximus Messalinus, consul in 20. According to Tacitus, Cotta was the "author of every most savage proposal and thus the object of deep-rooted resentment" (6.5.1). Cotta's resolutions included banning M. Libo Drusus' *imago* in funeral processions (2.32.1), imposing responsibility for a governor's wife's misconduct on her husband (4.20.4; Ulpian in *Dig.* 1.16.4.2), and an attack on the elder Agrippina and two of her sons (5.3.2). I have argued elsewhere (Levick 1978) that Tacitus and Suetonius and any literary source either used have utterly misconstrued the words, disjoining the outburst from the content of the letter. True to himself, Tiberius was here deploying irony, dissimulating the irritation of an angry schoolmaster faced with ill-behaved schoolboys whom he would like to cane. The context is significant enough, but there is also the vocabulary, notably the call for the gods to destroy him, which Tiberius has borrowed from Roman comedy, taking on the role of the angry old man.

This interpretation has not found favor, usually being repudiated on general grounds without reference to the detail (for interpretation on quite a different level, see Haynes 2003, 181–183). Or, more

subtly, if that was what Tiberius was doing, there was also the face value of the words that lay behind the joke (Seager 2005, 230). Tacitus has facilitated this rebuttal by putting the crucial words after his account of the substance of the letter, disjoining the two. To continue a letter that began with a heartfelt confession of torment with the rehearsal of the beginnings of a friendship, and so on, would have been extraordinarily inept.

When the letter was read out many hostile ears were eager to hear of woes for a *princeps* hated for taking on the post in the first place, for allowing Sejanus to reach almost to the pinnacle of power, for ruining favorite politicians and members of the imperial family on his way, and finally for destroying Sejanus and a number of small fry in his wake with no improvement in political life as a consequence. The torment would have been reported in the earliest histories (even if the complete text of the letter were not preserved in the *acta senatus*) and was picked up by Tacitus in his search for guilt and by Suetonius, either independently or from Tacitus; alternatively, it was Tacitus himself, followed by Suetonius, who took the letter from the *acta*. The viciousness of the character that Tiberius was defending, Cotta, provided a context that made it more plausible to plunge the letter from Capri into the darkest shades of meaning. In modern times psittacism, as Syme would call it, set in: what had once been accepted because it was what a tyrant should mean became enshrined as Gospel and is reinforced in modern times by its acceptance in antiquity.

Nowhere is the fatal force of Tacitus' conviction clearer than in his account of Tiberius' "accession," which occupies the opening of the *Annals* (and made it impossible to start them with the first days of 14 CE, as he began the *Histories* with the first of 69). The "accession" saw Roman people and *princeps* confronting each other, as Velleius Paterculus reports (2.124.3), recalling scenes that he must have witnessed.

Paradoxically, Woodman (1998b) has demonstrated that what has been taken for the obvious interpretation of the "accession" debate, that Tacitus takes it for a hypocritical mime put on by the power-hungry Tiberius, and programmatic for the portrait that is to follow, is vulnerable. (O'Gorman 2000, 43 removes discussion from this level altogether.) Woodman summarizes Tacitus' account as follows: "Tiberius found himself in control ... (5.4), but he declined the immediate formalizing of his position (7.5); ... he relied both on minimal power (7.3) and on power which he had not formally accepted (7.5); although he had intended to formalize his position at the later debate (7.6–7). He began that debate by trying to withdraw entirely ... (11.1); that attempt was superseded by a compromise proposal that he should be given helpers (12.1); when that

compromise seemed abandoned he reverted to the constitutional limbo in which he had been since Augustus' death (13.5). Although he did not confess that he was assuming command (13.5) he proceeded to rule for more than twenty years" (Woodman 1998b, 69). The abandoned compromise he immediately adopted when he took Germanicus and Drusus as helpers.

The first problem in the conventional interpretation concerns Tiberius' reply to his senatorial interlocutors, which Tacitus describes as demonstrating more *dignitas* than *fides* and Woodman translates "More in such a speech was impressive than credible" (1.11.2): a speech that was lacking in "sincerity" could not be "noble." Besides, Tacitus here lays particular stress on Tiberius' obscurity. Yet on the traditional view, the senators have no difficulty in understanding: their fear of appearing to understand presupposes that they have understood. "The fathers, whose one dread was that they seemed to understand, poured out complaints, tears, and vows" (1.11.2). The episode is designed to show, not the collusive hypocrisy of the Senate, but its abject subservience to the *princeps*. They thought that he meant to retire completely, as he had done in 6 BCE (though even then he remained in possession of tribunician power and *imperium maius* in the East). When Tiberius asserted that the rule of a number of men (*plures*) would be preferable to that of one, he did not mean that he needed the support of Germanicus and Drusus Caesars: he meant that the whole Senate should govern. The crucial fear (*metus*) was not a fear lest they seem to see through Tiberius' hypocrisy – pretending reluctance to assume control (some would even say to accept formal powers) – but the genuine fear that they had of his retiring, if they correctly interpreted his intentions. For *metus si* ("fear if") cannot stand for *metus ne* ("fear lest"). Hence for Woodman (1998b, 63), "there has been no evidence for Tacitus' portrayal of Tiberius as a dissembling and hypocritical *princeps* who pretended, in Griffin's words (1995, 63), 'that he did not want the power when he did'."

There is an inherent improbability in this thesis, despite the complex supporting arguments: the author whose repeated keynote is the deceitfulness of Tiberius in the interest of his own position introduces him to the stage in a muffled but sincere attempt to resign the position that he had implicitly accepted when he accepted adoption and formal powers in 4 CE, confirmed in the year before Augustus' death. First, Tiberius' unwillingness to allow any discussion of his position at the first debate after Augustus' death. He explained that himself, and his explanation should be accepted: that session was to be devoted to the obsequies (*de honoribus parentis consultaturum*, 1.7.4; 1.8.1; cf. 1.8.3). How could Tiberius afford such a leisurely pace? The answer again is simple. He was already in possession of the

vital powers: tribunician power and *maius imperium*. A second debate followed, at which his position was discussed. No wonder in that: too much stress should not be laid on it. After the death of a man who had ruled for nearly half a century there must be debate. It would not have been baldly on the subject of Tiberius' place in the state, but on the state of the union: *infinite de republica* (Gel. 14.7.9; cf. Livy 22.1.5). Anything could be brought up, but the consuls had their proposal ready, welcoming Tiberius to the *statio* (post) of his father. This provoked a response from Tiberius, who spoke of his own view of his position in the state (*Ann.* 1.11.1). Nor is the grammatical problem with *metus* insuperable if we take it that it is not a question of fear of being understood, but rather of the fear (sc. of what would happen) if they allowed Tiberius to realize that they saw through his charade. They had to go to extreme lengths in their contrived attempts to "persuade" him to accept his position. Nor need we be forced to choose between two contrary meanings of *plures*, the enhanced numbers of rulers who would improve government. True to his ambiguous persona, Tiberius, if he used this word, was allowing his audience to understand it of any number of politicians; Germanicus and Drusus of course, the first already active in Gaul and Germany, the second designated consul for 15, but other eminent senators as well, the *principes ciuitatis* who, according to the *Fasti of Amiternum*, were the target of Libo Drusus in 16 CE (Ehrenberg and Jones 1976, 53): it was for the Senate to say who should take part. As to the phrase that so clearly implies Tiberius' concealed intentions, "for Tiberius initiated everything through the consuls, as if the old Republic were in existence and he were undecided about commanding" (*nam cuncta per consules incipiebat, tamquam uetere re publica et ambiguus imperandi*, 1.7.3), Woodman deals with that by adjusting the punctuation: *tamquam uetere re publica; et, ambiguus imperandi, ne edictum quidem quo patres in curiam uocabat nisi tribuniciae potestatis praescriptione posuit*: "and, being ambivalent about commanding, even when he posted the edict by which he summoned the fathers to the curia, he headed it only with the tribunician power." *Imperare* then has to mean "to issue commands," a most unsuitable word to use of the relations between *princeps* and Senate, especially at this juncture.

Tacitus struggled for truth, scrupulously using the material available to him and searching out more. When he was unable to come to a conclusion he signaled it to his readers. The obstacle in his way, insuperable because it was partly of his own making and arose from the indignation he felt at the way the principate had developed, was his conviction that, whatever Augustus had achieved in establishing the system and whatever collaborative senators had done

to hasten the loss of freedom, one man in particular was responsible. That was the truth that Tacitus perceived and sought to promote, as others had done before him. The judgment of course was only partially true.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For the difficulties that Tacitus' text presents to the reader (and to himself) O'Gorman (2000) gives a graphic account. Penetrating analyses of particularly vital and difficult passages are given by Woodman (1998a) and embodied in his translation (2004). Syme (1958) and in many other works seeks to show the artistic license that Tacitus allowed himself. For the most unrelenting chronicle of Tacitus' insidious techniques of (mis)representation, there is nothing to beat the survey in Develin (1983), which goes far beyond Ryberg (1942). Taking a closer view, Damon (1999) studies "The Trial of Cn. Piso in Tacitus' *Annals* and the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone*" and provides "New Light on Narrative Technique," although not all her strictures on Tacitus are justified. Griffin (1995) offers a valuable analysis of the aetiology of Tacitus' approach. More favorable to the author, the essay of Bosworth (2003) on ancient historians and their sources is couched in general terms, or rather focuses on Q. Curtius, but is valuably sobering as far as embroidery of sources is concerned. On a point of detail, but one that shows how closely Tacitus lived with his subject, Miller (1956) should still be read.

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Tacitus' History and Mine

Holly Haynes

When I first met Tacitus I was twenty-four years old, and he has been my guru ever since (I'm forty-five now). The root of the word "guru" in Sanskrit means heavy, weighty, or even difficult (it is also the root of the Latin *gravis*) and in the yoga philosophical tradition the guru is the "heavy" in your arsenal of tools and practices that guide you toward self-enlightenment. That also makes him the difficult one, the one who works you the hardest and puts the most obstacles in your way. "Guru" is a particularly apt way of describing Tacitus, since his way of communicating is obscure and often paradoxical. Often he seems to be making a joke at someone's expense, and often, too, I have the sense that unless I really exert myself intellectually, the joke will be on me.

As oblique as his methods of communication are, Tacitus makes us look at ourselves square in the face and own up to the contradictory logic of our own desires and prejudices. He requires that we examine our comfortable opinions about ourselves and our place in the world and dig deeper into the murky parts of our personalities where our attitudes toward power lie: how much we want it, how much we fear it, how abject we are in front of it. Here we must confront the part of ourselves we would most like to cover up, since it has little to do with social mores and the rational behaviors we would like to think govern daily life. In the relationship between the emperors and their subjects that form the greatest part of Tacitus' interest, every era may see not only the outlines of its own political hierarchy but also the timeless struggle between the self and what is outside it; what threatens to overwhelm or engulf it.

What is attractive to me about Tacitus, then, is that his view of history foregrounds the personal investment of the person who is writing it. This does not mean that we should dismiss his history as "subjective," in the commonsense usage of the word that implies that

anything written “subjectively” lacks truth-value. One of the most valuable aspects of Tacitean historiography is its engagement with the whole question of what counts as “true” and how that truth is built from the interrelationship of outside events and internal perspectives. He makes us confront the uncomfortable proposition that history is the history of a struggle between outside and inside and that the stakes of this struggle are the knowledge of ourselves, the belief in some kind of meaning for our existence, and the hope that the investigation of this struggle will redeem us from passive subjugation to the external events that shape that existence. Tacitus saw many of his senatorial peers, both his contemporaries and those in the past of which he writes, as spineless worms – not because they could not stop tyranny but because they did not engage with it fully and did not question their own modes of relationship to it. His histories present just such a question all the time, in every line, in grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. This question is the basis for ethical behavior, defined as honesty with respect to one’s own character and engagement with the world and is a particularly tricky one to answer in times such as Tacitus knew.

Tacitean historiography might be mistaken for an anti-liberal version of history, with its suggestion that giving in to power creates the kind of enjoyment he represents as characteristic of many of those close to the *princeps* (the *delatores*, for example, or those who simply revel in cruelty, like Tigellinus, the informer against Petronius). But I would argue that this is one of the most important truths he tells, and that if we examine ourselves honestly we would have to admit that there is a terrible enjoyment in giving up responsibility for our own lives, in letting external circumstances be the excuse for our existence rather than a shaping factor, in saying, in all kinds of situations from the personal to the politically extremely fraught, “It’s not my fault, I had to do it.” This kind of giving up is the antithesis both of the ethical and of everything Tacitus’ writing stands for. The struggle in his writing represents instead a constant and awful realization that “It is my fault and I *choose* to do it” in the face of no good alternative. The cost is guilt; the benefit is the relief that comes from writing himself into history, making this struggle public, and engaging his readers not only in his process of self-definition but also their own.

For this kind of confrontation between ourselves and what is outside us that we fear will crush us, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan uses the analogy of the praying mantis: he asks us to imagine what it would be like to confront a giant female praying mantis, knowing that we are wearing a praying mantis mask but ignorant of whether it is a female or male mask; i.e., of whether the female will eat us or pass us by (Fink 1997, 60–61). Now in this light,

consider what Tacitus says at the end of the *Agricola* about the confrontation between the senators and the emperor Domitian: “Under Domitian the chief part of our misery was to see and be seen, when our sighs were noted down, when that savage face and the ruddiness with which he fortified himself against shame were at the ready to mark out the pallor of so many men” (*praecipua sub Domitiano miseriarum pars erat uidere et aspici, cum suspiria nostra subscriberentur, cum denotandis tot hominum palloribus sufficeret saeuus ille uultus et rubor, quo se contra pudorem muniebat*, Ag. 45.2).

The most frightening part of living under the regime of Domitian was to be seen by him without knowing *what* he was seeing – a guilty person or an innocent one? It was hard to tell what kind of a look Domitian was giving his senatorial subjects, as his ruddy complexion obscured it; all they knew was that he had the power to command their deaths and that his exercise of it depended on something in them that they imagined he saw. They had no control over this exchange of glances and could only hope that they were not wearing the male praying mantis mask. The responses that this situation generates in his senatorial subjects varies, and Tacitus’ *Agricola* in part presents a contrast between the heroic generalship and subsequent quiet retirement of Julius Agricola, his father-in-law, and the acquiescence of Tacitus and other members of the Senate to Domitian’s murder of their peers: “Soon our hands dragged Helvidius to prison; the dying countenance of Mauricus and Rusticus disgraced us; Senecio spilled out over us with his innocent blood” (*mox nostrae duxere Heluidium in carcerem manus; nos Maurici Rusticique uisus foedavit; nos innocenti sanguine Senecio perfudit*, Ag. 45.1). Tacitus’ representation of the dynamic between emperor and Senate is a distillation of the human condition as we struggle in the face of what we feel controls us. Our actions are often dictated by the feeling that we must or should behave in certain ways, and we react to this constraint along a spectrum of behavior from outright rebellion to craven obedience.

Tacitus’ oeuvre reads like a psychological study of many of these behaviors, but not from the vantage point of an objective, scientific observer. The difficulty of his language expresses his own conflict of thought and action that he struggles to resolve by writing history. This conflict is the result of living through the tyranny of Domitian, when, as Tacitus puts it in his own cryptic way, “we would have lost memory too, as well as voice, if it were as easy to forget as to keep silent” (*memoriam quoque ipsam cum uoce perdissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset obliuisci quam tacere*, Ag. 2.3). Tacitus kept silent and not only survived but flourished politically. With Domitian gone and a more benign regime in place it was time to tell the story, but how? How do you speak of your acquiescence to your own subjection,

especially when the consequence was the tacit betrayal of your peers? His difficult writing betrays this struggle.

Older scholarship on Tacitus battles over what it sees as the degree of bias or sense of personal injury that colors his historiography (Walker 1952; Martin 1981; Mellor 1993). His complicated rhetoric, though recognized as masterful, was seen as a liability to the truth of his narrative. The focus of these studies tends either toward the literary or the historical; the idea that there might be history inherent in his language is never really explored. In this view history becomes the other of language, while language is synonymous with bias or untruth. When I was first studying Tacitus, in 1989, Hayden White's book *Metahistory* was sixteen years old and his idea that truth in historiography was as much a function of rhetoric as fact had just begun to be taken seriously by scholars of ancient historiography. The focus on language as history, instead of merely the vehicle to convey it, was frightening to a discipline as far removed from its object as Classics is from Greek and Roman antiquity. Nevertheless White's system of the "tropes" of historiography – he argues that historians explain the causes of historical change according to the poetic structures provided by metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony – was seen as useful for understanding the "fictional" qualities of ancient historiography. Scholarship on ancient historiography changed its course from seeing rhetoric as a problem to becoming interested in how and why ancient historians do things differently from their modern counterparts; for this new focus, Hayden White's ideas proved very useful (except to Arnaldo Momigliano, who grumbled in an essay addressing *Metahistory*: "Historians are supposed to be discoverers of truths. No doubt they must turn their research into some sort of story before being called historians. But their stories must be true stories," 1984, 50).

Momigliano was certainly not alone in his views, nor has subsequent scholarship abandoned the "true story" model for interpreting ancient historiography. As the title of P. J. Rhodes' 1994 essay "In Defence of the Greek Historians" shows, the field is still uncomfortable with abandoning the idea that the ancient historians were to the best of their abilities faithful, non-fictionalizing recorders of things that really happened (for this attitude, see also Bosworth, 2003), and that their lapses into what we understand as "fiction" need defending. But what I am arguing here, and not only with respect to ancient historiography, is that language operates as a historical force as much as governments or armies or the way people organized their societies, and a historian like Tacitus absolutely forces us to pay attention to this aspect of history. My own focus is therefore different from Hayden White's rhetorical model for understanding

historiography. While I align with his idea that narrative is an essential component of structuring experience, I want to move away from conceptualizing language as a filter and emphasize instead the inseparability of language and experience. Tacitean language is a piece of history because its voice gives body to one individual's experience, but we can also properly call it "history" rather than just "historiography" because its voice does not belong to Tacitus alone. It is a part of his genius to embody in language not only his own experience but that of his era. In his prose we experience both the general and the particular.

Influenced by his work with the founder of Method acting Constantin Stanislavski, David Mamet says: "My main emphasis ... is on the rhythm of language – the way action and rhythm are identical. Our rhythms describe our actions – no, our rhythms *prescribe* our actions. I am fascinated by the way, the way the language that we use, its rhythms, actually determines the way we behave, rather than the other way around" (Wetzsteon 2001, 11). Of the language in his play *American Buffalo*, he says "of course it's not really spoken speech at all; it's dramatic writing that happens to have rhythms similar to those of spoken speech" (MacNicholas 1981, 66). This notion of language closely resembles what I believe is going on in Tacitus' narrative. Replace the phrase "spoken speech" in the previous quotation with the word "history" – understood as Momigliano's "true story" – and you have what I argue constitutes Tacitean historiography. Thus, Tacitus' history is language-as-history; language is the primary artifact we uncover in reading his work and through it a mode of thought that interweaves both conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational approaches to the world. I should emphasize that understanding Tacitus in this way is not the same thing as "psychoanalyzing" him or the society of which he writes, in the same way that Robert Storey (1979, 1), speaking of Mamet's characters, emphasizes that it is "fruitless to analyze their 'psychology' ... they behave as their language directs them to behave, with unquestioning faith in its values." It is this "unquestioning faith" that both Mamet and Tacitus nail to the wall by showing its concretely destructive results, without positioning themselves as some kind of "observer-outside-of-language." If there is little good in Tacitus' vision of his world, that is because of the supreme difficulty in maintaining an awareness of one's own use of language at the same time one is using it and knowing no other way to use it.

I will pursue the idea of the "true story" further, but let me backtrack toward that idea by talking about my own introduction to Tacitus. This occurred in Alain Gowing's seminar on the *Annals*, in my second year of graduate school (one of the great pleasures of

contributing to the present volume is the opportunity to pay homage to other gurus, too). I was studying comparative literature as well as Classics and reading Flaubert's *Salammbô*. Not very far into the semester I discovered a passage in *Salammbô* that virtually reproduces in theme and content *Annals* 1.34–35, where the mutinous veteran soldiers in Germany grab Germanicus' hands and put them into their mouths, so that he can feel their toothless gums – a sign of their long service. The question we were working on in the *Salammbô* seminar was what Flaubert was up to when he included such exhaustive historical detail in his novel. Critics complained of his “having wanted to study and reconstitute *le néant*” – literally “the nothing” – because any sense of real place and time was usurped in the novel by the avalanche of seemingly unimportant information (Descharmes and Dumesnil 1912, 152). Was *Salammbô* history, in which case all the detail was more acceptable but the superstructure of the love story was not, or fiction, in which case the rules of character, plot, and description had been set aside in favor of boring trivialities? It fascinated me that practically the same problem arose in the scholarship concerning Tacitus, whose work, despite its historical detail, reads to many scholars more like a fiction because of incidents and descriptions that he had clearly invented to bolster his own narrative agenda.

I did not perceive the scope of my interest at the time, but I realize now that the reason this issue so captured my attention was because the question it really begs is: who is the “I” that perceives the problem? Academic interest in the appropriate boundaries for history and fiction arises from the much more basic desire to find a fixed point of reference outside the self. The concept of History as a static entity, fixed because it is over, is attractive because it holds out the promise that it can be unambiguously known. But the fixative is language, the outward manifestation of another's consciousness. History is the other, not of language but of the self, and to know it involves getting to know oneself. Some historians push us farther in that direction than others, and my attraction to Tacitus stems from my understanding of his work as an open invitation always to doubt and question what I think I know about myself. Now that I have been working with him for almost fifteen years, I see that every question I have asked about him has been a question about myself as I struggle with the project of life and especially with feelings of subjection in the face of the many others that constitute my life, from the benign to the intimidating, friends to institutions.

The suggestion that history is a more open-ended construct that inheres in patterns of language initially created a great deal of resistance in the discipline of Classics, but Tacitus' determinedly

difficult language creates an oxymoron: a historian who *tries* to miscommunicate. You might even go so far as to say, if you wanted to be really provocative, that history is just the arena he chooses in which to investigate the problem of understanding, though the choice is far from random or unimportant. The reason for this choice is that understanding starts with the self and its relation to others, and in the history that Tacitus knew, the stakes of this understanding – of this relation – were life and death, honor and betrayal, ethical politics and tyranny.

It seemed to me, as I began working on Tacitus for the first time, that Tacitus and Flaubert addressed the problems and issues of understanding in similar ways and that the accusation of wanting to recreate the “nothing” could be equally leveled at Tacitus, though I do not think that my interpretation of that concept is what Flaubert’s critic had in mind. The “nothing” that both authors reveal has to do with what is left when language is stripped away, with their exploration of what worlds the different usages of language create and sustain, and what stumbling block, what unsayable thing, makes these worlds possible and necessary. These two authors share an interest in the stupidity – what Flaubert calls *bêtise* – of conventional language, which turns sinister when the dead repetition of common opinion obviates independent thinking and justifies acquiescence to an unethical status quo. Both are great imitators of this kind of language. Tacitus’ histories are less a narrative of events that took place during the first century of the Roman principate than a documentary of the narratives that went on in people’s heads during that time: the unconscious narratives that wove together traditional moral themes with the exigencies of the present. Thus, while an easily identifiable characteristic of his work is the way in which he reports what people said about events – a characteristic that makes his own opinions hard to pin down – he is even harder to understand when he reproduces what people are not even aware they are saying. This kind of imitation leads to the ironic tone that pervades his writing and the uneasy sense in his reader that unless she “gets it” she too is worthy of the disdain he shows toward the mindless acquiescence to imperial authority that he criticizes among his contemporaries.

The main point of contact between Tacitean historiography and Flaubertian fiction, then, is that both make language their object. In this sense Flaubert wrote history every bit as much as Tacitus did: a documentation of a particular use of language that shaped its milieu into the events we now recognize as the history of the era. For both of them, language is the main event, as tangible and concrete as any other event about which they write, and in fact the precondition for any of those events, whether historical or fictional. Again, the

argument against this view of history might be that it ignores the public in favor of the private and makes history into the personal, psychological struggle of the individual against power. According to this argument the power, will, and efficacy of the majority is ignored: how would it explain something like the popular power of the Eastern bloc countries in the 1990s, Velvet Revolutions? I counter that Tacitus' view addresses not only his own situation and that of the so-called great men who were closest to power, but also the consciousness of groups in their relationship to their leaders. Freud's notions about identification with power and the desire/hatred it generates would not have been unfamiliar to Tacitus.

In mirroring imperial discourse and opening up its repetitions and common opinions, Tacitus shows the truly frightening side of imperial culture: not crazy tyrants who impose their will on terrified senators but the language those senators speak that reinforces the behavior of the crazy tyrant and their own terrorization by him. This language is the legacy of Augustus, under whom, as Tacitus says at the beginning of the *Annals*, the institutions of government "had the same names" as always. The consuls were still called consuls, but their position in the symbolic hierarchy of politics and power had entirely changed. What does it do to the subject to be called by the same name, that is, to retain *nominally* the same place in the symbolic structure but in fact *occupy* a very different one – one that has no name? This place, between the named and must-not-be-named, corresponds to what Flaubert's critic calls *le néant*. What happens to the subject who finds himself in this place? Tacitus' answer is that he starts using language in a very odd way, and Tacitus' own language is a complicated interweaving of the often self-contradictory discourses that sustained the senatorial subject after the onset of the principate under Augustus. This narrative principle connects some of the most recognizable aspects of Tacitus' writing: conflicting opinions about historical events that Tacitus records (one of the best examples of this is the differing interpretations of Augustus' principate he presents at *Ann.* 1.9–10); the paradoxical *sententiae* ("by the consensus of everyone, [Galba] was capable of ruling, if only he had not ruled," *Hist.* 1.49.4); and the pervasive irony that always leaves me, at least, feeling as if something, maybe me, is having a skeptical eyebrow cocked at it. With this use of language, Tacitus casts a critical eye at his own position in this discourse, his own story, and how to make sense of it; his own way of being honest and speaking ethically in order, with the greatest of difficulty, to find a way to act ethically in situations – such as life under Domitian – that make ethical action a difficult proposition.

Let me make this more concrete. Suppose I am a neurotic whose conversation revolves around things that make me anxious, but

instead of acknowledging my anxiety and trying to deal with it I always say, “I’m just going through a phase.” Those who know me well are familiar with this tic in my speech pattern and know that it signals my backing away from the real issues at hand. After all, “I’m just going through a phase” is a meaningless statement. A phase of what? What does it mean to “go through” it? There is both a conventionality and a stupidity to this kind of phrase. Now suppose one of my unkind friends, fed up with acquiescing to the fiction that everything with me is fine and with the dubious behaviors in which I engage because I back away from a real investigation of my own neurosis, interrupts one of my narratives by saying, “Well, you’re probably just going through a phase.” Obviously this is meant ironically, a product of her exasperation with my lack of self-awareness. I am either supposed to understand that she is repeating my own words and thereby get a glimpse into how empty they sound or else I appear foolish because I understand myself so little.

If we take a look now at *Annals* 2.47–50, we can see just this kind of a repetition of conventional stupidity in the way that Tacitus lines up events in the narrative. The narrative sequence is as follows: a major earthquake destroys twelve cities in Asia and Tiberius must proceed diplomatically with his choice for administrator of the aid-funds so as to avoid stepping on the consular governor’s toes; Tiberius demonstrates his liberality at home by refusing several bequests, instead transferring the money to senators impoverished through no fault of their own; Tiberius consecrates the temples vowed by republican heroes and refurbished by Augustus; the law of treason (*maiestas*) begins to make its presence felt in the trial of a woman accused by an informer (*delator*) of insulting Augustus, Tiberius, and Livia and of committing adultery.

What does Tacitus’ choice of sequence in this part of the narrative tell us? The focus is on events as they pertain to senatorial interests. Tiberius is the main actor, but the subtext is the difficulty that his position introduces into the system of government, putatively still that of the republic, but disguising from itself the real fact that power lies in the hands of one man who has the backing of the military and who is no longer Augustus. The deals that the Senate negotiated with Augustus that so increased his authority were justified in the storyline that accompanied this unfolding scenario by the dire times from which he had “saved” the republic. But those deals were with Augustus; now the Senate is faced with Tiberius. How will the deals be negotiated now? What storyline will fit this new circumstance, and how will the Senate imagine itself in this new story? In these chapters Tacitus begins to unfold this storyline for us, not by saying “the senators thought x, y, and z about the new situation,” but by

presenting to us, via his sequencing of certain events that took place at this time, the actual line of senatorial thinking. These chapters detail the logic of the internal dialogue that sustained relations between the Senate and Tiberius in this fairly early stage of his regime. It is as if, by reading them, we retrace the unspoken political dialogue of the time; we follow its psychological footsteps, so to speak, but with the possibility, via Tacitus as the intermediary, of looking up from the path and noticing where it goes astray.

One way in which we can see this happening is in the uneasy fit between the events themselves and the senatorial angle that Tacitus presents in narrating them. We should be uneasy at the juxtaposition of natural disasters such as earthquakes and news about Tiberius and the Senate. What is Tacitus trying to tell us? These two things go together: they are both catastrophes. Certainly Tacitus, looking back from his own era at the earlier developments of the *princeps* – Senate relationship and in particular at the early treason trials, would have seen retrospective cause for alarm. Again, rather than wave an obvious red flag and say something like “Then began the treason trials that would poison the Senate against itself and show the true nature of this tyranny, which the Senate did little to combat” he signals disaster narratively by making earthquakes the lead-in to senatorial business. Then he comments obliquely on the state to which the Senate has been reduced in the Tiberian era by showing their response to the natural disaster, which is to worry less about how Rome can or should help its unfortunate provincial dependents than about maintaining the façades of status among its members. Since they have little real power, the outward displays of hierarchy become all important even as they degrade the positions themselves, such as the shameful consulship-for-a-day that was awarded to Rosius Regulus by Vitellius after the consul Caecina had turned traitor against him and been removed from office (*Hist.* 3.37).

The events – earthquakes, treason trials – are catastrophic, but the Senate’s interest is in maintaining its own hierarchy and safety, bolstered by a façade of ancestral republican *religio* (Tiberius’ dedication of the restored republican temples, to which I will return later). By Tacitus’ era, one of the greatest traumas the Senate had suffered was the internal divisions created by the *delatores* who played on the paranoia of the *princeps* and enriched themselves through trumped-up charges against their peers. After the principates of Nero and Domitian, two of the worst for this kind of activity, no small task for the new regimes of Vespasian and Nerva was to heal the rifts in the Senate. This is the scenario that has its beginnings in just such a trial as Tacitus narrates at *Annals* 2.50, a couple of chapters on from the earthquakes. Yet it was not only the *delatores* who had created

strife among the senatorial class. Tacitus often expresses his disgust with the go-along-to-get-along attitude that he locates in the Senate from the very beginnings of the principate and that he often characterizes as *servitudo*, “slavery” in the sense that the senators no longer spoke freely or voiced any kind of real dissent with the ideas of the *princeps*. Of course his position is a difficult one, given that he himself is one of them. There is irony in the way he narrates this section of the *Annals*, as the reaction he records to natural and political disasters – earthquakes, the possibility of Tiberius’ usurping people’s legacies, treason trials – is the Senate’s “me-first” interest in them. He does not condemn the Senate outright but slips into their thoughts, into the unconscious narrative line that governs their actions and behavior at this time. These narrative juxtapositions are angry, but the Senate is not Tacitus’ only target, or he could have simply condemned them outright. The irony in this oblique method of communication is also a signal of self-loathing, of the unsayable thing that generates all the rest of his narrative, of his own guilt, of his own implication in this form of government.

In this section, then, Tacitus does more than simply report factually on a series of events that all happened around the same time. The sequence of the narrative reproduces a train of thought that is neither directly Tacitus’ nor the senators’, but represents instead an in-between place. Using a spatial metaphor to describe his language, we can locate at least two levels from which the narrator speaks. There is the level of the statements, which in this section are a kind of laundry list of events whose most obvious connection is Tiberius’ involvement. If we leave it at that, the section is mildly interesting as an example of Tiberius’ relatively good behavior at the beginning of his principate, which can be contrasted with its subsequent degeneration. But leaving it at that evades the problem of language; it evades the possibility that something else, some other meaning, inheres in the way the statements are put together and that there might be a stronger logic at work than the loose thematic connection provided by the involvement of Tiberius. Mamet helps us to unpack this logic with his idea that language prescribes action: with his emphasis on what is said, believed, and thought, Tacitus catches us up in the *talk* of the time, and what is talked about, as Mamet shows us, is also naturalized or becomes second nature – to the extent that it covers over enormity of action. The French linguist Emile Benveniste (1974, 82) helps us out here: with him we can locate this second level – this meaning other than that of the statements themselves – as that of the place from which the narrator speaks; the unspoken assumptions, codes of behavior, societal and political regulations and so on that *inform* his statements.

The narrator here is both Tacitus the historian, who reflects on these events of the past in order to transmit them to posterity, and Tacitus the senator who identifies with the material he writes – the history of the principate – because it is also the history of his own experience. Understanding and unpacking this past is also a way of telling a story about his own life, of examining his own use of language. This is what he makes very clear at the beginning of the *Agricola*, his first work, when he talks about finding a voice again after so many years of silence. In the *Histories* and the *Annals* he declares that he writes without bias or prejudice, and he is telling the truth: it is not against the *principes* that he wages his greatest struggle, but against himself as a representative of the senatorial body that had and in his own time still has to discover for itself some meaning for the word *libertas*.

The logic of Tacitus' narrative thus involves a split between a storyline of honest and accurate reporting of past events and a storyline of the attitudes that led to a progressive loss of *libertas* and to the impossible situation Tacitus describes in the *Agricola* that he, his peers, and Julius Agricola all experienced and handled in different ways. When Tacitus makes the famous statement that "there can be good men under bad emperors" (Ag. 42.4) we should hear not only praise of his father-in-law but an impassioned plea for and against himself and others who survived Domitian. How, is the big question all the rest of his work addresses; how can one be good in what is often a very bad situation? What could be learned from the past and from those who did not try hard enough to be good or from those whose goodness simply turned them away from politics and from life itself, like the suicides who, Tacitus feels, opted out? This question arises in the gap between the two levels of the narrative and is therefore connected to the irony that is such a feature of his writing. For irony is also a function of language operating on two levels, of a voice divided from itself. If Tacitus' reader misses the irony – if he or she reads only on the level of the statement – the question never arises except as a mere suspicion that something is a little askew, and this mirrors a blind spot in Tacitus himself. He cannot turn around and see himself from behind; he cannot *present* himself fully as a divided subject (O'Gorman 2000, 181). Instead this division inheres in the narrative as the possibility of meaning misrecognized, and the degree to which the reader experiences the narrative as potentially hostile is the degree to which Tacitus distances himself from the painful truth of his own situation. In other words his challenge to the reader is always "Do you get it?" – which is also a way of saying "Do you get me?" without him fully wishing to be gotten.

Annals 2.47–48 moves from natural disaster to the unrecognized

disaster that is occurring in the Senate: the loss of freedom of expression and ethical behavior. This loss is linked to the repression of recognition that the Senate is now beholden to one man. The obliqueness that is such a feature of Tacitean language and that finds a particular expression in his reproduction of what I am calling the senators' unspoken storyline is his representation of this repression. Tacitus did not need the psychoanalysts to tell him that repression can be located in language; he saw it in the speech and behavior of his colleagues – which is to say he also recognized it in himself – and he reproduced it as the focus of his histories. The transition between *Annals* 2.47 and 2.48 is a great example of this narrative technique. *Annals* 2.47 ends with the choice of an ex-praetor to oversee the aid in Asia, so as to avoid the *aemulatio* (“rivalry”) that would arise if another ex-consul were sent. The next chapter begins with the remark that Tiberius’ “generosity on behalf of the public” (*in publicum largitio*) in sending funds to Asia was no less well received (*grata*) than his generosity (*liberalitas*) in refusing inheritances unless he genuinely deserved them through a close connection (*amicitia*) with the deceased. Thus, the transition is ostensibly between Tiberius’ public generosity toward the needy provinces and his private generosity toward the Senate in not encroaching on their bequests. But in fact Tacitus’ focus shifts from Tiberius indirectly to the Senate early in *Annals* 2.47. The verbs and their subjects change from Tiberius promising to send the most funds to the cities that suffered the most (“**Caesar promised** to send ten million sesterces and to remit however much they owed the national and imperial exchequers for five years,” *centies sestertium pollicitus Caesar, et quantum aerario aut fisco pendebant in quinquennium remisit*, *Ann.* 2.47.2) to the impersonal *habiti* (“**The Magnesians** from Sipylus **were judged** to be next in terms of their injury and indemnity,” *Magnetes a Sipylo proximi damno ac remedio habiti*, *Ann.* 2.47.3) and *placuit* (“it was pleasing,” 2.47.3) of the decision to exempt several cities from tribute for five years and send the overseer of the relief funds. The Senate is not the subject of these verbs, but its action is implied, particularly by *placuit*, the regular term for the senatorial vote. In fact, it is important to Tacitus’ project that the Senate not be named directly as the agent here, since the larger point is the Senate’s lack of self-awareness or willingness to take responsibility for its involvement in political decision-making.

The passive *habiti* and impersonal *placuit* in *Annals* 2.47.3 shift us toward the involvement of the Senate in the decisions about how and where to distribute relief funds, although the money itself comes directly from Tiberius. So the choice of the ex-praetor and the whole worry about senatorial hierarchy becomes more of a general concern than something Tiberius specifically prescribes. However, although

Tacitus does not spell it out directly, this concern over hierarchy speaks to the problem of senatorial position and power since the advent of the principate. With its powers curtailed by their subservience to Augustus and now Tiberius, but with the pretence of a balance of powers still in place, the Senate becomes protective of its nominal authority. The significance of symbolic authority inherent in rank increases to the degree that actual authority decreases. The contrast between the suffering of the ruined cities at the beginning of the chapter and the self-serving senatorial bureaucracy at the end is striking, but the recognition that the rivalry between two ex-consuls in the region will only hinder relief efforts is as much of a fact as the earthquakes themselves – and, as the narrative implies, as much of a tragedy. Of course, such rivalry was a concern before the government was taken over by one individual: *aemulatio* was the stuff of Roman politics, though detrimental at least as Livy and Sallust view it. Thus, the apparently positive implication that Tiberius allows the Senate its voice in this matter actually shows that in doing so he encourages – and the Senate shows itself all too willing to engage in – the worst sort of politics.

The main point here, however, is that things are both the same as they used to be and not the same at all – *eadem magistratum uocabula* (*Ann.* 1.3.7). The slice of narrative between *Annals* 2.47–51 acts like the device the optician puts in front of your face to test whether you need new glasses or not: “Better or worse?” he will ask, as he drops different lenses into each of the round circles in front of your eyes. The letter chart in front of you is the same, but the different lenses give you a different perspective. Tacitus often drops in the lens that makes the distance between you and the chart suddenly a lot longer and narrower and makes you feel a bit nauseous.

How Roman politics are “not the same” is not something Tacitus *can* spell out directly, because language too has suffered the same/not-same problem. For him, the only thing to do is create uneasiness in his own language and in his narrative, to tease out the strands of uneasiness in political discourse as a whole. History in Tacitus’ work inheres as much in how he makes you feel as in the content he relates. I have mentioned my feeling that there is a joke I am not quite getting; that there is in operation a kind of “mean girl” tactic of making the other, in this case the reader, one of Tacitus’ peers or me, uncertain as to whether there is a joke or not. I think in Tacitus there both is and is not a joke because on the one hand he ironizes the situation, and irony is funny, and he conveys the deadly seriousness of the Senate’s problem *vis-à-vis* its relations with the *princeps*. For a contemporary American reader, this problem still has currency. We do not have to worry about what kind of a tone or deal to strike with a

princeps who may turn out to be a tyrant, but we do have to worry about the infinite potential for our own subjection that is the stuff of every relationship we strike.

The section of the *Annals* I am talking about here details some events that foreshadow the deterioration of the Senate-*princeps* relationship. The irony for someone reading it is that Tiberius' behavior comes across positively, with the barest hints of what is to come. But the Senate's reactions display all the complications of that relationship without Tacitus remarking them directly. On the surface the narrative conveys both directly and indirectly what seem to be perfectly reasonable attitudes toward Tiberius. At the beginning of *Annals* 2.48, for example, we hear that Tiberius' *liberalitas* was "well received." What is understood but not explicitly stated is that it was well received *by the Senate*. Once again, where Tacitus could have passed his own judgment by making his own commentary on Tiberius' behavior ("Tiberius matched his generosity abroad with his generosity toward the Senate at home," or even more polemically, "Tiberius showed moderation in not taking advantage of the power he had to do whatever he wanted"), he instead puts the Senate between the reader and Tiberius and makes the Senate's thought paramount. And the Senate's thought is not outrage that one man has the power to usurp bequests that are not rightfully his, but gratitude that he does not do it.

The make-believe invisibility of Tiberius' presence – the ideological misrecognition of the nature of his power and relationship with the Senate that Tacitus here obliquely narrates – is also signaled by the absence of his name throughout the section, until the very end. It would be an interesting project to investigate more systematically and thoroughly the instances where Tacitus calls the *princeps* by his own name rather than the symbolic title "Caesar," and vice versa. Here, let me draw a contrast between the situation that obtains at *Annals* 2.47–51 and one a few chapters earlier, 2.37–38, where the subject is again Tiberius' generosity to impoverished aristocrats. In this earlier section, Marcus Hortalus, grandson of a famous orator, makes a plea for financial help based on the fact that he had married and had four sons at the urging of Augustus, who did not wish to see such a famous house die out. Now he requests assistance so that his sons will not be reduced to penury. Tiberius refuses him in rather harsh terms, though in the end he does grant a moderate sum to each of the sons. In this section Tacitus refers throughout to "Tiberius." However, in *Annals* 2.47–51, the *princeps* is "Caesar" throughout until the last section, 2.51, where he takes pleasure in the Senate's divided opinion over whether to support his sons' (Germanicus' and Drusus') choice for a new praetor or look to the law, which dictates that the number of a

candidate's children should be the deciding factor (I reproduce here the Loeb translation out of interest in the exclamation point with which it punctuates the last sentence): "Tiberius was overjoyed to see the Senate divided between his sons and the laws. The law was certainly defeated, but not immediately and by a few votes only, – the mode in which laws were defeated even in days when laws had force!" (*Laetabatur Tiberius, cum inter filios eius et leges senatus disceptaret. Victa est sine dubio lex, sed neque statim et paucis suffragiis, quo modo etiam cum ualerent leges uincebantur, Ann. 2.51.2*).

What I want to suggest now is that the *princeps* is "Tiberius" when Tacitus authors his own discourse and "Caesar" when he speaks as the voice of the unconscious senatorial storyline. This storyline cannot directly name Tiberius because it cannot name itself; that is, the subjects that unconsciously author it, the senators themselves, do not have a clear idea of their own identity *vis-à-vis* the *princeps* because of the conflicts, also unnameable, that are inherent in their relationship to him. Thus, Tacitus' statements about Tiberius' reactions to Marcus Hortalus and to the Senate's aligning itself with his sons' choice of praetor reflect Tacitus' own attitude toward these affairs – matter-of-fact in the case of Hortalus, with a trace of sympathy for Hortalus' failure to move Tiberius, and wryly ironic in the case of the Senate's choice, as indicated by the Loeb translation's exclamation point. Otherwise, what the use of "Caesar" underlines in the rest of *Annals* 2.47–51 is Tacitus' adoption of the discourse of common opinion, whose voice emanates from the gap between Senate and *princeps* and, like their relationship, is always under construction. The interesting question this possibility raises, too, is where the voice of power itself emanates from. The split between "Tiberius" and "Caesar" suggests that the latter stands for the symbolic, universal position of power that must be obeyed and that appears to need no authority other than itself: in other words it is self-positing, not just by the person who holds the position but by those who accept and internalize this law. "Tiberius" is in a sketchier position and the Senate's rejection of him is more of a possibility.

Another passage that argues for my interpretation here is *Annals* 2.28. The section of narrative that includes this chapter deals with a foolish young aristocrat named Libo Drusus who finds himself the victim of a charge of revolutionary activities. Tacitus remarks that the case is of interest "as it marked the discovery of things which for so many years had consumed the state" (*quia tum primum reperta sunt, quae per tot annos rem publicam exedere, Ann. 2.27.1*). Libo's activities are brought to Tiberius' attention not by the *delator* Firmus Catus himself but by an intermediary, and when Catus asks for a personal meeting with the *princeps* he is denied: "When [Catus] found enough

witnesses and slaves who had knowledge of these matters, he asked for an interview with the *princeps*, though the charge and the defendant had been made known to him by Vescularius Flaccus, a Roman knight who enjoyed a close relationship with Tiberius. Caesar, without rejecting the information, denied a meeting: ‘their conversations could be carried on through the same intermediary, Flaccus’ ” (*Ut satis testium et qui serui eadem noscerent repperit, aditum ad principem postulat, demonstrato crimine et reo per Flaccum Vescularium equitem Romanum, cui propior cum Tiberio usus erat. Caesar indicium haud aspernatus congressus abnuit: posse enim eodem Flacco internuntio sermones commere*, Ann. 2.28.1). Catus asks for a meeting with the “*princeps*”; Flaccus is on close terms with “Tiberius”; “Caesar” denies the meeting through a statement that belongs neither directly to him (i.e., is not given as a direct statement) nor is it introduced explicitly as indirect statement. “Caesar’s” reason for denying the meeting – his laying down the law – is transmitted through a gap between the action of denying (*abnuit*) and what we take to be his statement on the matter (*posse*). But this statement has no subject, only an implied connection with “Caesar.”

Following this loose indirect statement comes “Caesar’s” actual confrontation with Libo, in which he honors him with a praetorship and conceals his suspicion: “though he could have checked all of [Libo’s] words and actions, he preferred to know them” (*cunctaque eius dicta factaque, cum prohibere posset, scire malebat*, Ann. 2.28.2). Tiberius’ way of handling this situation reads like an ominous precursor to Domitian’s “noting down” of senators’ non-verbal modes of expression. In both cases the *princeps* becomes the judge, not as the voice of the external law (as in “Roman law”) that prescribes certain penalties for certain offenses, but as the internalization of a kind of moral law, a law of right or wrong behavior that has supplanted what the external law prescribes as legal or illegal. According to Tacitus’ narrative, the principate changes the relationship of subjects and the law, because in addition to the codes of jurisprudence there is another, unspoken law, arbitrated by the *princeps* alone. This relationship obtains in the looks exchanged by subject and *princeps*, where each party wonders what the other is thinking and the stakes for both parties are life and death, though the proximate danger is to the subject. As arbiter of *this* law, the *princeps* in Tacitus’ narrative is “Caesar” – a symbolic presence whose law is a reflection, or even construction, of its subjects’ relationship to it.

This is Tacitus’ greatest anxiety, that he and his peers are as responsible – as guilty – in this relationship as the *principes* against whom generations of scholars accused Tacitus of being biased. This feeling of responsibility also carries with it the question of what is to

be done. Which action or position is the right one to adopt in the face of an other, the *princeps*, who neither dictates what is to be done nor lets one off the hook if one does the “wrong” thing? There is a kind of terrible freedom that the Senate enjoys under both good and bad *principes*: the freedom to choose its relationship to the *princeps*, but without the possibility of this choice ever being completely free because of the lack of a prescribed set of rules governing the relationship (“Act this way and the *princeps* will act that way”). With better *principes* one has more of a hope that a wider range of actions will yield a favorable or at least non-hostile response, but the anxiety is always there, inherent in the nature of the relationship.

Annals 2.47 is not just a report of events abroad, a kind of coda to a longer narrative in Book 2 about events in the provinces, from which Tacitus transitions to events at home. Although the transitions between the provinces and Rome provide narrative structure in the *Annals*, they can signify something more important, as here, where the operative words are “disaster” and “money.” Both chapters have to do with Tiberius as the ultimate force that arbitrates between salvation and destitution, with the Senate as either the bureaucracy through which the money is administered to the needy recipients or as the needy recipient itself. There is a metaphorical connection between the natural disasters and what is going on between the Senate and Tiberius, rather than just a happenstance transition from events in Asia to those in Rome. The beginning and end of *Annals* 2.47 present an ironic contrast between the natural catastrophes happening in the cities in Asia, whose physical destruction Tacitus clearly spells out, and the Senate’s concerns for maintaining the façades of symbolic power. *Annals* 2.47 and 2.48 show how these concerns, which at the end of 2.47 merely seem petty in the face of the tangible havoc abroad, are a sign of the tragedy that has overtaken the Senate and that is every bit as serious and life-threatening as the earthquakes. His description of the ruined cities in Asia recalls that of the destruction in Italy as a result of the civil wars of 69 CE, with which he begins his *Histories* (1.2.1). There, the disasters occur as a result of the total breakdown of government following the death of Nero, and Tacitus directly suggests the connection between natural and political disaster.

Tiberius is the elephant in the room, but the narrative makes no direct comment on the implications of his presence or power. This elision can be felt in the first sentence of 2.48 and is again the effect of a passive participle (*petita*, “sought”): *Magnificam in publicum largitionem auxit Caesar haud minus grata liberalitate, quod bona Aemiliae Musae, locupletis intestatae, petita in fiscum, Aemilio Lepido, cuius e domo uidebatur ... tradidit* (“Caesar increased his great largess on behalf of the public [i.e., the earthquake relief funds] with a

[private] generosity scarcely less welcome, because he transferred to Aemilius Lepidus the property – sought for the privy purse – of Aemilia Lepida, a wealthy woman who had died intestate,” *Ann.* 2.48.1). The passive participle *petita* (“sought”) has no agent: the source of the power to seek these funds for the *fiscus* remains obscure in the narrative, just as the source of Tiberius’ power is the issue the Senate does not bring up. On one level they all know very well where his power comes from – a combination of the backing of the military and their own by-now accustomed acquiescence to Augustus’ inventive arrogations of authority – but they act as if they do not. This logic of “knowing very well, but nevertheless,” as Octave Mannoni puts it in his discussion of fetishism (1985, 9), is the necessary fiction that keeps this form of government going, the flaw that is also the foundation.

The difference between Tiberius’ “generosity on behalf of the public,” where the public nature of the generosity is spelled out in *publicum*, and *liberalitas* is worth a closer look. In *liberalitas*, a general term for generosity, there is an *implied* contrast between public and private, where in fact no contrast is really spelled out at all. This is a signal of another of the unspoken truths of the principate: the confusion of public and private in the government that is *res publica* in name but in actuality has become the *res priuata* of the *princeps*. What this non-contrast points out is that Tiberius can arrogate private monies to the public purse, which has actually become indistinguishable from his own private funds. So Tiberius’ *liberalitas* is a private and a public matter, just as his hold on the government has made the “public affair” (*res publica*) into a private one. All this is elided by casting the fact that Tiberius did not usurp bequests as the Senate’s reaction to it, which leaves the problems unspoken.

Tiberius’ behavior in the matter of the bequests would obviously have been of great interest to the Senate, but the whole reason for this being the case is the unspoken acknowledgment of the possibility that Tiberius could usurp anyone’s inheritance anytime he wanted. The unspoken assumption behind that is that the Senate would let him. Yet just as in *Annals* 2.47, the catastrophic event, which in 2.48 is the usurpation of the Senate’s authority and the Senate’s acquiescence, is eclipsed by the reaction to Tiberius’ actions. The chapter ends not with a condemnation of a completely un-republican system in which the fear exists that one person, with putative power no greater than any other senior statesman, might take over inheritances that do not rightfully belong to him. Rather, the chapter ends with a statement about how Tiberius helped those whose penury was undeserved and how he forced to abdicate those who had squandered their inheritances “through vice.” Here, Tacitus reveals an important part of

the senatorial storyline to be the division of “we” and “they” through a moralization of the causes of poverty. In the cover-up of the real moral failure, which in the end is the Senate’s inability to stop the encroachment of tyranny, the petty moralizing of who deserves to stay poor becomes the issue. All this is pendant to another big-picture issue, namely that Tiberius is the arbitrator of the senators’ elevation from disgraceful poverty. Those whom he helps feel their good fortune deserved. Their unwillingness to openly acknowledge that this good fortune depends upon the beneficence of one man takes instead the form of feelings of self-righteousness. The real issue is Tiberius’ power, but Tacitus’ focus is on the storylines that senators invent in order to live with it and with themselves. This “we/they” split follows the logic of self-justification: those who get what they want from Tiberius have an investment in not rocking the boat, but an internal narrative is also invented about who deserves what and why to justify the politics of acquiescence.

Again, the question I raise here is who makes – or further who *accepts responsibility for* – the judgment on Tiberius and on the people he helps or harms?

He did not encroach upon the bequest of anyone unless he had earned it through close connection; he stayed away from those unknown to him and those who, feuding with others, made the *princeps* their heir. But just as he alleviated the honorable poverty of innocent men, so he removed from the Senate the spendthrifts and those who were impoverished through wrongdoing: Vibidius Virro, Marius Nepos, Appius Appianus, Cornelius Sulla, Quintus Vitellius.

(*Ann.* 2.48.3)

Which “I” behind this section of the narrative says “I judge the poverty of some honorable; I disapprove of these other reprobates?” Why name the reprobates but not those whom Tiberius helped? My answer is that it is not just Tacitus’ personal judgment on the situation but a more generalized snapshot of the attitude of the Senate – an attitude that contributes to the larger development of the Senate’s relationship to Tiberius and the developing history of the Senate’s position under the principate. Naming only the reprobates emphasizes the feeling of moral superiority, and this, not the specific historical personages involved in Tiberius’ decisions about financial assistance, is what Tacitus is after here.

It is not that Tacitus inserts markers into the narrative that specifically indicate “now I am not talking in my own voice or expressing only my own opinion”; in other words, the difficulty of making this argument is that there are often no tangible narrative

signs of this more general (and ironic) perspective such as do exist in a section like *Annals* 1.9–10, where he splits the narrative between the divided opinion over the merits or demerits of Augustus' principate. Rather, what I am arguing is that in a section like the one under discussion here, when from the perspective of traditional republican governmental policy (the fiction that was and still in Tacitus' era is operative) there is nothing good or legitimate about the situation, he reports the ways in which it was becoming acceptable and even defensible. The voice in which he reports this is his and not his. This voice recognizes its own participation in the system and therefore speaks for itself and also from this participation, commenting ironically upon it.

As in the previous chapter (*Ann.* 2.47) about earthquakes and senatorial hierarchy, this chapter (2.48) on inheritances makes believe a logic where a gap in logic exists. The first half of the chapter introduces Tiberius' power to usurp inheritances (though he does not do so); the second half reports his moderate application of this power. In the official political narrative of the time, which remained that of the republic, the obvious logical connections between the two are the plain outrageousness of a situation in which one person, *princeps* or no, could usurp an inheritance, and the arbitrariness of Tiberius' generosity, particularly given the fact that earlier in this book he showed himself inclement to Hortalus' request for funds that the Senate finds worthy (*Ann.* 2.37–38). But the unspoken narrative unfolds in the relationship between Tiberius and the Senate, which consists of an unequal exchange of looks and the interpretation of those looks. Each wishes to discover the boundaries within which to operate safely with respect to the other's power, but the inequality exists in the discrepancy between real power, the power over life and death that the *princeps* increasingly comes to wield, and the symbolic power of the Senate.

In this narrative the logical connections between the two chapter halves of *Annals* 2.48 are the Senate's gratitude that Tiberius uses his power benignly and its justification of its own subordinate position. This is the narrative whose outlines Tacitus uncovers in the divided modes of his historiography, indirectly because there is no direct language for it and also because it is the narrative of his own experience which, as he indicates at the beginning of the *Agricola*, can only be told in a halting and imperfect way. Tiberius is not just Tiberius but a composite picture of the problems with imperial power that plagued the principate from its inception under Augustus. His secrecy and the difficulty with which he presented a Senate who tried to understand his wishes, features that all the main sources for the era attest, take on a particular significance in Tacitus' work as the features

of the unknowable other who has *unnameable* power. This power is unnameable because it is ill-defined and therefore unknown. What can or will Tiberius do? The secrecy may have been a real attribute of the historical Tiberius, but it was also a feature of a principate in which the Senate's position was always contingent on the personality of the *princeps*, which in some sense was always unknowable. We can trace back to Tiberius' secrecy the dynamic between *princeps* and Senate implied in Tacitus' description of Domitian's mental note-taking of the thoughts and feelings of the Senate via their sighs and facial expressions: *princeps* and Senate had always eyed one another suspiciously, but it was the *princeps* who really held the power of the gaze. The really scary thing is not even the explicit power over life and death but the unpredictability of its exercise. There is no name for this power other than the Senate's own fear, and this fear cannot be directly named. It is not a specific fear of a specific action but a pervasive dread that colors the whole of life under this system of government. It is, from what we gain from Tacitus' writing, the stuff of the imperial self.

A couple of years ago, I gave a talk at a major institution about Tacitus' obituary of Petronius, in which I suggested several of the ideas I am discussing here. One of the attendees, a historian, kept asking the same question: "Yes, but isn't this just Tacitus' perspective?" I did not know how to answer this question at the time, and in fact I did not even understand very well what it meant. It seemed obvious to me that of course this was Tacitus' perspective, but somehow it also seemed to the historian that this cheapened the thrust of my argument about the nature of imperial politics. In other words, if it could not be proven that others testified in the same way as Tacitus to the social and political ramifications of the principate, there was something untrue about Tacitus. Here I return to the very interesting set of ideas that underpin Momigliano's grumpy comment about the "true story." I think what Momigliano means is that the true story of history consists of an account of what really happened in the past, as opposed to something completely invented, and that the truth of the story inheres in the collation of as many sources as possible by a disinterested observer, who makes a rational account of them. And I think that some aspect of that notion was what lay behind the question at my talk. What has always proven extremely difficult for me to explain in these situations is that I do not devalue the importance of this kind of true story, but that others exist – as many as there were subjects under the principate, though the only ones we know are those whose authors actually committed them to writing, and further, as many as there are interpretations of these writings. This is clearly a very different kind of truth from the kind of best-

guess knowledge of events that we gain from comparing sources, and the reason it is important to me is that the process of reading and understanding the truth behind all these stories gives us knowledge of ourselves, if we stop for a moment and ask ourselves what it is that we *want* out of them. In this sense what we usually call bias is the truest element of all, for it corresponds to this element of want. Who wants what out of any particular story? This is always the question I am interested in asking.

When I wrote my dissertation, four years after my first encounter with Tacitus in Alain Gowing's seminar, I referred to Tacitean narrative as "anxious." At that time I think that I didn't fully know what I meant; I only had a sense that it was divided from itself in a way that seemed remarkable to me and that this division had been remarked by other scholars but not accounted for in a way that satisfied me. As my work on Tacitus progressed, I became unconsciously more invested in his control and conscious manipulation of this narrative mode, and I stopped using the word "anxious" to describe it almost entirely. Lately, though, I have come around again to finding the concept of anxiety useful for thinking about the difficulties with which he presents a reader, because of the feeling I have always had that he is hiding something from me – what I described earlier as a joke that I may not be getting. But perhaps it is more than a joke, or perhaps the sense of a joke is there to cover up something else, something he himself does not see but feels and wishes at all cost to avoid bringing into the open. At the same time there is a kind of majestic honesty in the struggle we see waged in his Latin, a call to encounter more honestly our own difficulty with freely expressing ourselves in the face of what we fear may crush us.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Those wishing to pursue the theoretical ideas in this chapter about subjection and the negotiation with power will be particularly interested in Butler (1997), Freud (1921), Henderson (1998), Lacan (2007), and Žižek (2007). For the literary and rhetorical aspects of Tacitean historiography and the different standards of "truth" in ancient historiography in general, see Marincola (1997), Woodman (1998), and especially Levick in this volume. Finally, for an excellent and altogether different interpretation than my own of Tacitus' attitudes toward politics and writing, see Sailor (2008).

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*Seneca in Tacitus*¹

James Ker

1. Introduction

There is something arresting about the way Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 5 BCE–65 CE) shows up in the surviving text of Tacitus' *Annals*: in 49 CE, Agrippina, seeking to get in the good books of the Roman people, not only recalls a famous scholar from exile back to Rome and gives him the praetorship, but brings him right into the heart of the imperial household to serve as a teacher for her twelve-year-old son Domitian, the future Nero (*Ann.* 12.8.2). This is an unexpected development that one of Seneca's detractors would refer to as his "sudden fortune" (*subita felicitas*, *Ann.* 13.42.4), and it places Seneca – a scholar, an equestrian, a provincial from Spain – in a position of unusual proximity to power. The Tacitean portrait of Seneca, evolving in a series of anecdotes over sixteen years of imperial history covered in *Annals* Books 12–15, traces out the consequences of this dramatic arrival, consequences which are often unintended and ironic. Through his snapshots of Seneca, Tacitus allows his readers to take the measure of a complex historical actor whose life and career illustrate the potential and the pitfalls of elite involvement in the principate.

The Tacitean Seneca is not just any historical actor, however, but a writer – one who had been a conspicuous model (both positive and negative) for first-century Roman students of rhetoric, including Tacitus himself, *and* whose writing was a central component of his historical activities. As Ellen O'Gorman has observed, "Seneca's 'primary' status in the *Annals* as a minister of state is articulated through his magisterial, literary status both within and outside the text of Tacitus" (O'Gorman 2000, 148). Below, therefore, after considering some of the general characteristics of Seneca in Tacitus, we will look more specifically at how Seneca's status as a writer

becomes central to Tacitus' portrayal.

2. Measuring the Man

To get a sense of the overall “anatomy” of Seneca in the *Annals*, it will be useful first to survey his appearances. In Book 12, Tacitus mentions Seneca only once, describing his recall from exile by Agrippina and her purposes in recalling him (*Ann.* 12.8.2). At the beginning of Book 13, Seneca and the praetorian prefect Afranius Burrus are introduced in tandem at the time of Nero's accession in 54 as “rulers of the emperor's youth, and together of one mind (*concordes*), a rare thing in the company of power” and who “presented a united front (*certamen utrique unum erat*) against the ferocity of Agrippina” (13.2.1–2). In subsequent chapters Tacitus mentions various incidents from the first two years of Nero's reign involving Seneca in the role of speechwriter and advisor, often in collaboration with Burrus and especially against Agrippina (13.3.1, 5.2, 6.3, 11.2, 13.1, 14.3, 20.2, 21.1). Later in the same book Tacitus also mentions an incident from the year 58 involving the professional accuser P. Suillius Rufus who, just before being banished, had informally accused Seneca, contrasting Seneca's sudden fortune and hypocrisy with his own, uncorrupt career (13.42.1–43.1). In Book 14 Tacitus mentions the assistance Seneca rendered to Nero in the following year before and after the plot on Agrippina's life (14.7.2–3, 11.3), as well as Seneca and Burrus' attempts to entice Nero away from his interest in musical performance (14.14.2). Seneca is not mentioned again until after the death of Burrus in 62, which “shattered Seneca's power (*infregit Senecae potentiam*), because good conduct did not have the same sway with one of the two ‘guides’ removed (*altero uelut duce amoto*), and Nero was tending toward the less-reputable party (*ad deteriores inclinabat*)” (14.52.1). The criticisms made by Seneca's detractors result in the “interview” between Seneca and Nero, given by Tacitus in the form of two remarkable paired speeches, and Seneca's subsequent withdrawal from public and urban life (14.52.1–57.1; also 14.65.2, 15.23.4). In Book 15 Tacitus mentions Seneca's attempts to withdraw further after the Great Fire of 64 and Nero's rumored attempt to poison Seneca (15.45.3). In the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy, the historian describes how Nero exploited Seneca's possible implication in the conspiracy to force him to commit suicide like many of the other conspirators, giving Seneca's death scene in great detail (together with the suicide attempt of his wife, Pompeia Paulina) and mentioning a supposed counter-plot that would have replaced Piso with Seneca

Some first conclusions can be drawn about these appearances simply by considering what Tacitus does *not* mention. A comparison with what survives of Cassius Dio's account of the same years demonstrates that Tacitus, working from many of the same (now lost) sources for Julio-Claudian history, "could have selected much harsher things to say" (Dyson 1970, 80). Tacitus, for example, does not include sexual relations with mature males among the list of charges made against Seneca in 58 (whereas Dio does, 61.10.4) and does not mention that Seneca's vast and extortionate loans to Britons may have been partly responsible for the uprising in 61 (Dio 62.2.1). A comparison with other sources, too, shows that there are anecdotes that neither Dio nor Tacitus chooses to include, most likely because of their apocryphal status and/or because they belong to a more sympathetic biographic portrait of Seneca. These include the story that Seneca, when given Nero as his pupil, dreamt that he was instructing Caligula (Suet., *Nero* 7.1), and another that Seneca told his friends that Nero was like a lion whose innate cruelty, however well he was tamed, would return as soon as he had tasted human blood. The latter story comes from a scholiast to Juvenal (schol. ad Juv. 5.109) who also mentions that Seneca, at the time when he was recalled from exile, was planning to visit Athens – another detail unmentioned by Tacitus and Dio.

What Tacitus *does* mention is packaged in distinctive ways. When he includes criticisms, these are typically attributed to characters within the text. Whereas Dio gives the attack on Seneca's hypocrisy in his own voice, "owning" whatever hostility he may have imported from his now lost sources (Pliny the Elder is sometimes imagined to have been his most anti-Senecan source), Tacitus is at pains to connect such hostility with Suillius Rufus as a hostile witness motivated by the Senate's attempts to suppress professional accusers such as himself, who had once flourished under Claudius but now fires a parting shot against Seneca before being sent into exile (13.42.1). Moreover, after rehearsing Suillius' accusations, Tacitus wryly remarks, "Nor was there a shortage of those who reported (*deferrent*) to Seneca these [accusations] in the same words or adapted for the worse" (13.43.1), indicating that Seneca's informers may have sought to exaggerate the accusations so as to maximize the value of their information, and that Suillius, as a *delator*, ironically received a taste of his own medicine. Or when Tacitus mentions negative assessments of Seneca's role as an advisor, as Stephen Dyson notes, he "uses one of his characteristic surveys of contrasting public opinion to express his own ambiguities of judgment" (Dyson 1970, 73, commenting on 13.6.2–4). Tacitus is also sufficiently self-conscious about the favoritism of one of his

sources, Fabius Rusticus, that he pauses to qualify one anecdote (that Burrus, through Seneca's help, was saved from being dislodged from his role as praetorian prefect) by pointing out that this version of the story is unique to Fabius, who "of course tends toward praise of Seneca (*inclinat ad laudes Seneca*), by whose friendship he prospered" (13.30.2). Tacitus, then, is not inclined to give an analytic judgment of Seneca in his own voice. He withholds from him even a summarizing obituary of the sort given to Tiberius or Petronius (6.51, 16.18). Instead, Tacitus' entire narrative on Seneca exhibits the tendency toward an "audience-based" portrait (a category taken from Levene 1997), incorporating the conflicting judgments of several internal audiences.

To some extent the story Tacitus tells about Seneca would seem to be a study in the complexity and instability of a long life spent in the Julio-Claudian limelight and in the perceptions of such a life. His account is necessarily shaped by Seneca's cultural heterogeneity. This extends from his writings – of which Quintilian remarks, "He also pursued almost every potential endeavor, for we have speeches of his, poems, letters, and discourses" (*tractavit etiam omnem fere studiorum materiam: nam et orationes eius et poemata et epistolae et dialogi feruntur*, *Inst.* 10.1.128–129) – to his activities as a statesman, to his management of wealth. Indeed, scholars have emphasized this sense of multiplicity in Seneca's life and in Tacitus' account thereof and have inflected it in a number of productive ways. W. H. Alexander, for example, saw Seneca's varied historical agency as a limit case for historiography and invoked Seneca's "complex character which could not by any device whatever be viewed as a unity and hence could not be covered by a single sharp phrase, by any polarized points of view for good and for evil" (Alexander 1952, 372). Eleanor Leach, in turn, seeking to explain heterogeneity in Seneca's actions and writings at the outset of Nero's reign, has suggested that Seneca's "historical personality may appear less as a monolithic structure of fixed attributes than as a series of interactive responses to persons and circumstances" (Leach 2008, 266), and in particular she has questioned moralizing assessments of his actions, noting with approval that recent biographers of Seneca have been "less ready to affix such labels as righteous or hypocritical and more likely to examine the complexities of its motivation" (265). Thomas Habinek has argued that "for elite and would-be elite writers and readers, Seneca was ... a 'large-screen projection' of the possibilities they came to regard as useful, even necessary, for their survival" (Habinek 2000, 266), observing that the episodes of his life "contain within them an implicit analysis of the paths to power in the Roman world" (281).

Along similar lines we may also recognize Seneca's character as

being pulled in different directions by certain structural pressures in the *Annals*: for example, his echoes of Sejanus, which suggest problematic parallels in popular perceptions of the reigns of Tiberius and Nero, or his echoes of Agricola, that other good man under a bad emperor; his contrasts with the dynastic ambitions of Agrippina *and* the senatorial resistance of Thrasea Paetus *and* the luxurious celebrity of Petronius; and his alliance with the complementary military ideology of Burrus. To this extent, then, the complexities of Tacitus' portrayal are genuine symptoms of the radical complexity in Seneca's agency as an elite player in the orbit of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Differences between the scenarios in which Seneca acts or between the angles from which he is viewed are themselves revealing about the nature of elite agency under the principate: the complexity tells an important story, even as the potential for a coherent biographic portrait is dissolved.

At the same time, however, Tacitus does much to frame the incongruities themselves in terms that allow the reader to take Seneca's measure as a single historical agent whose discrete acts can be correlated and compared with one another in the reader's memory (and implicitly in the Roman collective memory) and around which a narrative can be assembled. The formation of a Seneca narrative is greatly facilitated by the major dramatic building blocks of his career as Tacitus tells it, especially through the interview scene and the death scene. These scenes have allowed scholars to chart the course of Seneca's life and career in broad brushstrokes, even if they have drawn different conclusions concerning the precise significance of its pivot points or concerning the tone of its final scene. But the possibilities for a narrative specific to Seneca's life and career are also enhanced at the micro-level by verbal and thematic repetitions between one anecdote and another, which sometimes reveal continuity but more often put ironies in full view, allowing the reader to measure the inconsistency or heterogeneity of Seneca's actions – and, with these, the dilemmas faced by any elite participant in the principate. In Dyson's insightful reading of the “artistic unity of the Tacitean biography of Seneca” (Dyson 1970, 79), a strong role is played by his observations about certain recurring key terms, such as *claritudo* (“renown”), *studia* (“studies”), *eloquentia* (“eloquence”), and *praecepta* (“instruction”). Even if I am inclined to disagree with Dyson's conclusions regarding Tacitus' hostility toward Seneca, his method informs the approach I adopt below.

3. Seneca's First Mention

We can begin to take our own measure of the Tacitean Seneca by considering more closely the first instance in which he is mentioned:

at Agrippina, ne malis tantum facinoribus notesceret, ueniam exilii pro Annaeo Seneca, simul praeturam impetrat, laetum in publicum rata ob claritudinem studiorum eius, utque Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret et consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur, quia Seneca fidus in Agrippinam memoria beneficii et infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae credebatur.

(*Ann.* 12.8.2)

But Agrippina, so as not to be known solely for bad deeds, secured a pardon for exile on behalf of Annaeus Seneca, and at the same time a praetorship, judging that it would be a cause for public celebration on account of his renown for his studies, and so that the boyhood of Domitius would mature with such a teacher and that they might use the same man's advice toward their hope for domination, because Seneca was believed to be loyal to Agrippina due to memory of her good service, and hostile to Claudius from grief over the injury.

We cannot be certain that this was the first mention of Seneca in the *Annals*: among other things, Tacitus probably mentioned (as Dio does, 59.19.7–8) the near-execution of Seneca by Caligula, from which Seneca was saved by the intervention of “a certain woman” who explained that Seneca was ill and likely to die soon anyway. At least one scholar has identified this woman with Agrippina (Clarke 1965, 64), thereby making “good service” (*beneficii*) in the passage above refer not just to Agrippina's recall of Seneca, but also (or instead) to her earlier assistance. Tacitus probably also mentioned (again, as Dio does, 60.8.4) Seneca's banishment by Claudius on the charge of adultery with Julia Livilla, here referred to as an “injury” (*iniuriae*).

As it is, however, this first surviving passage serves as a remarkably detailed introduction to the way in which Seneca will be represented throughout the Neronian narrative. We may note, first, Seneca's emphatic passivity here, as he is essentially commandeered to serve as a screen that will cover Agrippina's malicious acts and as an instrument that “they” (or, on another manuscript reading, “she”) will “use” as a means to power. This feature will be inverted later in Seneca's assertion of agency at Agrippina's expense, whether in using his friend Annaeus Serenus to serve as a screen to conceal from her Nero's relationship with Acte (14.2.1) or in retelling her biography in polemical terms after her death (14.11.1). Later still Seneca is allowed to comment ironically on his having been used “toward their hope for domination” (*ad spem dominationis*) when he reminds Nero, “It is the fourteenth year, Caesar, since I was located near your hope (*spei tuae*

admotus sum)” (14.53.2). Moreover, Agrippina’s vision of the future sketched out at this early stage will be overturned by “Burrus and Seneca,” the two-headed opponent that resists her continually through Book 13 and until her death in Book 14.

In this passage we encounter Seneca only through the eyes of Agrippina, who makes certain presuppositions about the still-absent exile even as Tacitus takes care to point out that Seneca’s state of mind was not known directly (“was believed,” *credebatur*). Tacitus here begins as he means to go on. For as we have already noted above, he will tend to present Seneca more often through the eyes of internal audiences who have their own partial views of him.

The most significant echo of this first passage, however, comes in Tacitus’ final footnote to Seneca’s death scene, which mentions the rumored counter-plot in which Nero’s death would be followed by the assassination of Piso, “and power would be given to Seneca, on the reasoning that he was without blame and that his renown for his virtues made him a welcome choice for the highest power” (*quasi insonti et claritudine uirtutum ad summum fastigium delecto*, 15.65). The irony may lie in the fact that when a nobler plan arose, Seneca’s death doomed it. But we may also feel that this second recall would have been doomed anyway by its structural resemblance to Agrippina’s plan with all of its presuppositions about Seneca’s usefulness and his loyalties.

So the first mention establishes some of the major terms through which the figure of Seneca will be represented and through which the irony of later changes can be registered. As part of this effect, individual details of this first mention also initiate minor threads through which the reader will be equipped to measure the competing narratives of Seneca’s career. Take, for example, Seneca’s “exile” (*exilii*), which will be referred to again, when Agrippina, by maligning “the maimed Burrus and the exile Seneca” (*in <de> bilis Burrus et exul Seneca*, 13.14.3), will try to put the genie back in the bottle; this theme, and the characterization of Seneca as “hostile to Claudius” (*infensus Claudio*), will also recur in Suillius Rufus’ attack on Seneca as “hostile to the friends of Claudius” (*infensum amicis Claudii*), under whom he had endured a most justified exile (*iustissimum exilium*)” (13.42.2).

The first mention additionally refers to Seneca’s existing independent relationship with the public, his “renown for his studies” (*claritudo studiorum*). Here this is something that Agrippina wants to exploit, but the theme is taken up in later criticisms of Seneca by his detractors, who claim that “he was diverting the enthusiasm (*studia*) of the citizens toward himself” (14.52.2) and ask, “When, finally (*quem ad finem*), would it not be the case that there was nothing

renowned (*clarum*) in the city that was not thought to be his invention?" (14.52.4). The theme also returns during the interview scene, in Seneca's own poses of modesty toward Nero; all he has given Nero, he says, are "studies (*studia*) fostered, as it were, in the shade, whose renown (*claritudo*) has come from the fact that I seem to have been present for the first beginnings of your adulthood" (14.53.4).

In Seneca's first mention we also see him introduced in a pedagogical role: he is recalled "so that the boyhood of Domitius would mature under such a teacher" (*ut ... Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret*). This moment is later recalled by Seneca's detractors, who assert, "Surely Nero's childhood was at an end and his adulthood was solid: he should remove his teacher" (*certe finitam Neronis pueritiam et robur iuuentae adesse: exueret magistrum*, 14.52.4), and by Nero, who insists to Seneca, "You nurtured my boyhood, and then my adulthood, with reason, advice, instruction" (*ratione consilio praeceptis pueritiam, dein iuuentam meam fouisti*, 15.62.2). In the death scene Seneca will look back on this role as one that has become obsolete, telling his friends, "Surely after killing his mother and brother, there was nothing left except the murder of his teacher and advisor?" (*educatoris praeceptorisque necem*, 15.62.2).

The reference to the "advice" (*consiliis*) which Agrippina expects Seneca will be able to offer also signals a key motif of the fluctuations in Seneca's role as a political advisor: the term recurs in Nero's initial speeches where "he recounted the advice (*consilia*) and examples given him for taking up the emperorship with distinction" (13.4.1), and in people's expression of trust in Seneca and Burrus as advisors, remarking "that Burrus ... and Seneca were recognized for their great worldly experience, ... that in the highest position of fortune most things are done through decisions and advice (*auspiciis et consiliis*) rather than with weapons and force" (13.6.3–4). The term is also used at the time of Seneca's death to characterize Poppaea and Tigellinus as "the inner circle of advisors to the raging emperor" (*saeuienti principi intimum consiliorum*, 15.61.2) and to refer to the "secret plot" (*occulto consilio*, 15.65) that would substitute Seneca for Piso.

Returning, finally, to Tacitus' first allusion to Seneca's "studies," we may wonder about its implications in regard to Seneca's writings. In fact, Tacitus will nowhere give a detailed characterization of the specific writings that earned Seneca popularity beyond describing how audiences reacted to the speeches he wrote for Nero (not least the letter justifying Agrippina's death), or mentioning how Seneca "was diverting the enthusiasm of the citizens toward himself" (14.52.2), that Seneca "was writing poems more frequently after Nero had developed a passion for them" (*carmina crebrius factitare, postquam Neroni amor eorum uenisset*, 14.52.3), and that Seneca's final dictated

words were “published in his words” (*in uulgu edita eius uerbis*, 15.63.3). Tacitus clearly presupposes that his readers had some familiarity with Seneca’s published writings (this will be his reason, in fact, for not repeating Seneca’s final dictated words), and it seems likely that Agrippina’s expectations about the popularity she will gain by recalling Seneca can be read against the background of what Seneca wrote. Her presuppositions about Seneca’s gratitude for her “good service” (*beneficii*) presumably correspond to Seneca’s explicit (and until now fruitless) plea in the *Consolatio ad Polybium* for Claudius to restore clemency to Rome by conferring on Seneca the “good service” (*beneficium*) of a return to Rome (*Polyb.* 13.3). At the same time Agrippina was distinguishing herself from Messalina, to whom Dio tells us Seneca had addressed a work unsuccessfully seeking his recall (Dio 60.8.5). Her assumptions about Seneca’s usefulness as a strategist may also be understood as building on aspects of Seneca’s works: in the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, for example, written in the late 30s under Caligula, Seneca had modeled himself on Areus, the philosopher of Augustus who offered sound advice to the empress Livia (*Marc.* 4.2–6.1). Yet Agrippina, in believing that Seneca was “hostile to Claudius from grief over the injury” (*infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae*), evidently doubts that Seneca will emulate the models of his *De ira* (written in the 40s) and assumes instead that he is nursing a desire for vengeance. Tacitus later seems to indicate that Seneca’s distancing of himself from Agrippina was accompanied by a philosophical aura because he mentions that Agrippina, now disenchanted with Seneca, sought to undermine him by mocking his “professorial tongue” (*professoria lingua*, 13.14.3) – a story that we may put together with Suetonius’ statement that Agrippina “steered [Nero] away from philosophy, warning that it was contrary to the interests of a future ruler” (*a philosophia eum ... auertit monens imperaturo contrariam esse*, Nero 52.1). In other words Tacitus presents Agrippina as making easy and erroneous assumptions about the compatibility of Seneca’s authorial persona with her political agenda and then wrestling with the consequences.

Tacitus’ first mention of Seneca, then, introduces many motifs that will recur, often in ironic distortions, over the next three books, providing the reader with the material for composing a narrative whose complexity matches the complexity of Seneca’s role as a historical actor. For the rest of our study, we will focus on the theme that adds special subtlety to this picture, namely Seneca’s identity as a writer.

4. Writing the Writer

As mentioned at the beginning, the writer Seneca is relevant to Tacitus in two distinct ways. The first concerns his status as a model in Tacitus' rhetorical education. There are, it is true, some reasons to question whether Seneca would have seemed an appealing model to Tacitus. Though he was the son of a historian and was capable of praising a historian such as Cremutius Cordus (cf. *Marc.* 1.2–4), Seneca never wrote history, and he even criticizes historians in several works (for example, *Breu.* 13; *Nat.* 3.pref.5–7) and parodies them in the *Apocolocyntosis*. Tacitus, for his part, has the interlocutors in his *Dialogus de Oratoribus* discuss the characteristic early imperial styles without any mention of Seneca (cf. Mayer 2001, 173). Yet Tacitus belonged to a generation for whom Seneca still loomed large: even if Quintilian, writing in the 80s or 90s, is referring to Seneca's own lifetime when he says that “virtually he alone was in the hands of the young men” (*solus hic fere in manibus adulescentium*, *Inst.* 10.1.126), he continues to treat Seneca as a persisting model whose influence needs to be qualified rather than banished, observing that “he can exercise one's judgment on either side” (*exercere potest utrimque iudicium*, 10.1.131). Thus, it is no surprise that certain features of Tacitus' style, such as his epigrammatic concision, correspond to the controversial stylistic tics that Quintilian associates closely with Seneca, such as “maxims of extreme brevity” (*minutissimae sententiae*, 10.1.129; cf. Syme 1958, 199–200).

Many years ago the German scholar Maximilian Zimmermann (1889) sought to identify precise Senecan echoes in Tacitus. Although Zimmermann included some resemblances that are probably to be classified as mere coincidences or commonplaces, his collection of examples leaves it beyond doubt that Tacitus appropriated many words, phrases, colors, and thoughts from the writings of Seneca. Consider, for example, some resemblances noted by Zimmermann in the later chapters of the *Agricola*. Three separate phrases describing Domitian are distorted echoes of Seneca's various writings. The emperor “decided that it was best for the present (*optimum in praesentia*) to store up his hatred” against Agricola (*Ag.* 39.3); Seneca remarks in the *Natural Questions* that the wise man “knows what is best in the present (*optimum in praesentia*)” (*Nat.* 2.36). Domitian also “allowed himself to be thanked” (*agi sibi gratias passus est*) by Agricola (*Ag.* 42.3); Seneca in the *De beneficiis* points out that men “allow themselves to be thanked (*gratias ... agi sibi ... patiuntur*) by those whom they have ruined, and pretend to be good and generous because they cannot prove themselves to be so” (*Ben.* 4.17.3). Tacitus describes Domitian as “by nature prone to anger” (*natura praeceps in*

iram, Ag. 42.15), corresponding to Seneca's statement that "nature makes some men predisposed toward anger" (*natura quosdam proclives in iram facit*, *Ira* 2.20.1). The most famous line of the *Agricola* is Tacitus' assertion, "Let those whose habit it is to wonder at splendid things know that great men can live even under bad emperors" (*sciant, quibus moris est inclita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos uiros esse*, Ag. 42.4). Even this would seem to be a paraphrase of Seneca's statement to his friend Serenus in the *De tranquillitate animi* that the purpose of his arguments is "so that you may know that even in a devastated republic there is an opportunity for a wise man to exhibit himself" (*ut scias et in adflicta re publica esse occasionem sapienti uiro ad se proferendum*, *Tranq.* 5.3).

As in his use of authors such as Sallust and Vergil, Tacitus makes intertextual allusions to Seneca that are not robotic but creative, integrating Seneca's language and thought into his own work. It is tempting, in fact, to see this very method of Tacitus as corresponding to Seneca's influential advice on intertextual borrowing: "We should imitate bees and, whatever we have gathered from our diverse reading, we should separate it (for things are better preserved when distinguished), and then, applying our mind's care and resources, we should blend together these various droplets into a single taste, so that even if it is apparent from where it was taken, it will appear to be something other than that from which it was taken (*ut etiam si apparuerit unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est appareat*)" (*Ep.* 84.5).

If we speculate on the significance of such allusions, we may not go so far as to agree with Zimmermann's characterization of Tacitus as a *philosophus Annaeanus* (Zimmermann 1889, 19), but it is clear that the resemblances go beyond the verbal and provide the historian with a rich palette for psychological and political observation and for literary resonance. Key themes in Tacitus have been linked with Seneca's writings, such as the essentially monarchic aspect of the principate (Syme 1958, 552), the tragic representation of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (Santoro L'Hoir 2006, 101–108), or the representation of death as a liberation (Schöneegg 1999, 24). Tacitus' choice to use Cremutius Cordus as an emblem of historiographic heroism (*Ann.* 4.35.4–5) may have been inspired by Seneca's focus on Cremutius and his writings in the *Consolatio ad Marciam* (*Marc.* 1.2–4). In the figure of Epicharis, the freedwoman whose suicide sets a standard that the other Pisonian conspirators found hard to emulate (*Ann.* 15.57.1–2), Tacitus blends parallels from Seneca's tragedies and *Epistulae morales* 70. For example, A. J. Woodman (1993, 119 n. 56) sees Epicharis' silence in the face of torture as resonating with similar reticence by the Nurse in the *Phaedra* (*Pha.* 882–885). Tacitus also

describes how Epicharis, on the way to her second day of torture, strangled herself by tying her breastband to the litter that was carrying her, and “squeezed out what little breath she had left” (*tenuem iam spiritum expressit*, *Ann.* 15.57.2). This echoes Seneca’s examples of captives who killed themselves in equally inventive ways en route to the amphitheater (*Ep.* 70.19–27; cf. Ker 2009, 61–62). Letter 70 is also one of several texts echoed in episodes involving Seneca himself, as we will see below.

The second way in which the writer Seneca is relevant to Tacitus is in Seneca’s deployment of writing in his historical activities narrated in the *Annals*. Seneca was not unique in this respect: as J. P. Sullivan notes, virtually all of the politically powerful figures of the Neronian period were also participants in literary circles, and literary reputations could have major political implications (Sullivan 1985, 42–43). But Seneca’s literary renown appears to have stood out even against this background, such that Dio can remark that already in the time of Caligula Seneca “exceeded all the Romans of his time, and many others, in his learning” (59.19.7). Thus, at the moment when Burrus’ death had broken Seneca’s power, Tacitus recounts how Seneca’s detractors devoted their energy to a critique of his behavior as a monopolizer of writing as a source of political advancement, and as *the* arbiter of literary taste:

They charged that he was appropriating all praise of eloquence for himself alone and that he was writing poems more frequently after Nero had developed a passion for them. For at the emperor’s entertainments he was openly hostile, mocking his ability to guide his horses, and making fun of his voice whenever he sang. When, finally, would it not be the case that there was nothing renowned in the city that was not thought to be his invention? (14.52.3–4)

Seneca’s being evaluated in primarily literary terms is in fact a recurring pattern in Tacitus and in Suetonius, who tells us how Caligula was already “scorning the more smooth and elegant style of writing to such an extent that he said that Seneca, at that time the most popular, was composing unadulterated declamations, and sand without lime” (*lenius comptiusque scribendi genus adeo contemnens, ut Senecam, tum maxime placentem, commissiones meras componere, et arenam esse sine calce diceret*, *Cal.* 53.2). Suetonius also mentions that as a teacher Seneca steered Nero “away from familiarity with the old orators ... so that he could keep him longer in admiration of himself” (*Nero* 52). As Habinek observes, Seneca appears to have exemplified the possibilities of writing as a form of elite social performance in the early empire (Habinek 2000, 286–288). One feature of Seneca’s

performance as a writer, emphasized by Leach with particular reference to the contrasting registers of the *Apocolocyntosis* and the *De clementia*, was his ability to engage in subtle ways with his aristocratic audience (Leach 2008, 266).

To see how Tacitus infuses his Senecan episodes with the complexity of Seneca's writing, both as a stylistic and conceptual reservoir and as a form of communication that served as a component of the historical Seneca's actions, I propose to consider four cases: (i) Seneca's early speechwriting for Nero, (ii) the letter written to justify the death of Agrippina, (iii) Seneca's face-off with Nero, and (iv) the role of Seneca's wife Paulina in his death scene.

(i) The Early Speechwriting

In Dio's account of Nero's early reign, Seneca's composition of speeches is mentioned in relatively straightforward terms; he states, for example, that Nero "read (*anagnous*) what Seneca had written (*egegraphei*)" both to the soldiers and to the Senate (61.3.1). Tacitus, however, gives in a set of progressive developments a more direct taste of how these speeches were decoded by an audience. The reader is told that on the day of Claudius' funeral first "the emperor began his speech praising [Claudius] (*laudationem eius princeps exorsus est*)" and, "while he was recounting the antiquity of his family and the consulships and triumphs of his ancestors, he himself was attentive, as were the others (*intentus ipse et ceteri*)"; then, "the commemoration of his liberal arts, and the fact that nothing unhappy had befallen the republic from foreign peoples, were listened to with sympathetic ear (*pronis animis audita*)"; but soon, "after he turned to his foresightfulness and wisdom, no one could control their laughter, although the speech composed by Seneca presented much polish, as that man had a talent that was pleasing and fitted to the ears of his age" (*postquam ad prouidentiam sapientiamque flexit, nemo risui temperare, quamquam oratio a Seneca composita multum cultus praeferret, ut fuit illi uiro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum*, *Ann.* 13.3.1). This account only progressively peels back the layers from Nero the speaker to reveal Seneca the author, in a process that corresponds to the gradual breakdown in the composure of the audience (including, it seems, of the speaker Nero himself) who all begin "attentive" (*intentus*), then are "with sympathetic ear" (*pronis animis*), and finally cannot control their laughter, as the customary exaggerations of funeral speeches are exceeded to the point of absurdity.

Although we discover Seneca behind Nero's speech, as readers we

may remain uncertain whether the audience laughed *with* Seneca or *at* Seneca. The phrase, “although the speech composed by Seneca presented much polish” (*quamquam oratio a Seneca composita multum cultus praeferret*) can be taken in more than one way. First, “although” may amount to “but, in the course of this,” thereby indicating that a deliberate mockery of Claudius was accompanied by a successful layer of self-advertisement by Seneca. The oration, suggests Leach, “had demonstrated [Seneca’s] skill in inducing his hearers to recognize discrepancies between realities and words at the same time that it made his influence within the court circle clear” (Leach 2008, 284). For deliberate mockery, it is hard not to think here of the *Apocolocyntosis*, which satirizes Claudius at the moment of his death and supposed apotheosis, including his funeral day itself. Senecan self-advertisement is the gist of later speeches of Nero, which Tacitus says that “Seneca publicized in the voice of the emperor, demonstrating what virtuous instruction he was giving, or to show off his talent” (*Seneca testificando, quam honesta praeciperet, uel iactandi ingenii uoce principis uulgabat*, 13.11.2). Second and conversely, “although” may amount to “despite the fact that,” indicating the failure of Seneca’s best attempt to have Nero carry off a straight-faced speech, a failure perhaps all the more surprising given that the final theme of Claudius’ “wisdom” (*sapientia*) was one over which Seneca might have been expected to have supreme control. On this view, Tacitus is observing that Seneca’s “talent that was pleasing and fitted to the ears of his age” (*ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum*) was not up to the task. Indeed, the implication of “no one could control their laughter” (*nemo risui temperare*) is that even Nero lost his composure as he delivered it – surely a failure of the teacher who was charged with his rhetorical education.

An implicit critique of Seneca is also suggested by the digression that follows, in which Tacitus describes how “older men whose leisure is spent comparing old things and present things observed that Nero was the first of those who had been in power over the state to have need of another’s eloquence” (*adnotabant seniores quibus otiosum est uetera et praesentia contendere primum ex iis, qui rerum potiti essent, Neronem alienae facundiae eguisse*, 13.3.2). A survey follows, from Julius Caesar, “rivaling the greatest orators,” and Augustus’ “ready and fluent eloquence, befitting an emperor,” to the observation that “not even in Claudius would you have found elegance wanting, whenever he delivered rehearsed words” – all contrasted with the fact that “Nero in his boyhood years immediately turned his lively mind to other things: sculpture, painting, practicing song or horse riding. And sometimes in the composition of poems he showed that he had in him the elements of learning” (13.3.2). The digression has resonances with

other Tacitean characterizations of the decadence of the principate and with the criticisms of Seneca's style and pedagogy made by various detractors, but with its image of "older men" debating and "comparing old things and present things" it especially recalls the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* (cf. Paratore 1962, 468 n. 90).

In the *Dialogus* itself, as noted above, Seneca is missing, yet here we seem to get the contextualization of Seneca within the history of oratory that was absent there. Interestingly, Tacitus' reference to Seneca's *ingenium ... temporis eius auribus accommodatum*, "talent ... fitted to the ears of his age," echoes a phrase from the *Dialogus* used by Aper, *oratio ... auribus iudicum accommodata*, "speech ... fitted to the ears of the judges," giving somewhat qualified praise to the style of the republican orator C. Licinius Calvus (*Dial.* 21.2). This is all the more interesting given that Aper explains certain problems in Calvus' style by remarking that Calvus "understood what was better, but what stopped him from speaking with greater elevation and polish was not that he lacked the will, but that he lacked the talent and the strength" (*intellexisse quid melius esset, nec uoluntatem ei, quo <minus> sublimius et cultius diceret, sed ingenium ac uires defuisse*, 21.2). This closely resembles, as it inverts, Quintilian's remark on Seneca, that "you would have liked him to have spoken with his own talent, but another's judgment.... That nature was worthy of wanting better things; what he wanted, he accomplished" (*uelles eum suo ingenio dixisse, alieno iudicio ... digna enim fuit illa natura quae meliora uellet; quod uoluit effecit*, *Inst.* 10.1.130–131). It is not clear if this is Tacitus' way of having Aper refer obliquely to Seneca, perhaps in cryptic admiration of his more modern and exciting style, but the echoes suggest at least that Tacitus' approach to Seneca may be more complicated than it seems at first glance. Certainly the Seneca of the *Annals*, being so closely associated with Nero's dependence on "another's eloquence" (*aliena facundia*), now stands in a clearer relationship to the *Dialogus*: whereas the concluding argument made there by Maternus had been to explain the redundancy of (forensic) oratory in the principate, in the *Annals* Seneca's oratory is closely tied to the needs of the principate. Within this context Seneca is found to be only partly capable of producing an appropriate performance. Quintilian wishes that Seneca had spoken "with his own talent, but another's judgment" (*suo ingenio, alieno iudicio*, *Inst.* 10.1.130). Tacitus shows how Seneca's speechwriting role for Nero further clouded the relationships between self and other, rhetoric and policy, elite and emperor, outsider and insider.

Seneca's role as speechwriter may ultimately be more favorable to Seneca than it is to Nero: O'Gorman has compellingly argued that in Tacitus' account "Seneca displays Nero as an absence (of voice) in

these moments of ghostwriting” (O’Gorman 2000, 151). Yet it is easy to read Tacitus’ first portrayals of Seneca’s speechwriting as already anticipating his failure in the role of advisor to Nero. We have already noted Tacitus’ remark that in some of his speeches delivered by Nero, Seneca was advertising his own influence, including possibly “what virtuous instruction he was giving” (*quam honesta praeciperet*, 13.11.2). These speeches are part of a specific episode recounting how “leniency ensued, toward Plautius Lateranus (*secutaque lenitas in Plautium Lateranum*), who had been expelled from his rank due to adultery with Messalina: he returned him to the Senate, making an oath of his clemency in frequent speeches (*clementiam suam obstringens crebris orationibus*), which Seneca publicized in the voice of the emperor, demonstrating what virtuous instruction he was giving, or to show off his talent” (13.11.1–2). The fact that Nero here commits himself to *clementia* obviously resonates with Seneca’s work *De clementia* written around this time, in which Seneca poses as a mirror showing Nero what he will be if he exercises this virtue, including an impersonation (prosopopoeia) of Nero’s own voice (*Clem.* 1.1.1–4). Indeed, Tacitus’ revelation that Seneca was in fact ventriloquizing through Nero makes *clementiam suam*, “his clemency,” ambiguous, potentially referring to Seneca’s rather than Nero’s clemency or indeed to Seneca’s *Clemency*.

Yet Syme has noted that Tacitus only ever refers to *clementia* ironically (Syme 1958, 414), and while Seneca’s lessons may be associated with the moderation of Nero’s early reign (the so-called *quinquennium Neronis*), the pardon extended by Nero to Plautius Lateranus turns out to be a problematic example. As Dyson observes, readers will have noted the irony in Seneca’s policy leading to the pardon of someone previously banished for adultery with an imperial woman (Dyson 1970, 75). Furthermore, in Book 15, after Tacitus has described Nero’s execution of the same Plautius Lateranus for involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy, he next mentions how “the killing of Annaeus Seneca followed” (*sequitur caedes Annaei Senecae*, 15.60.2). The deaths of Lateranus and Seneca were also paired in the popular imagination (cf. Juv. 10.16–18). Thus, if Seneca was able to boast to the public (cf. *uulgabat*, “publicized”) about his influence over Nero, Tacitus allows us to see Seneca as misguided about the extent of his power.

(ii) The Letter on Agrippina

After recounting the murder of Agrippina, Tacitus describes Seneca’s last and most controversial ghostwriting episode. Although Dio, in his account of Agrippina’s murder, had portrayed Seneca as complicit

from the very beginning, when he and Nero first got the idea to use a collapsing boat (62.12.1–2), Tacitus again takes a different approach, omitting any mention of Seneca's role during the event (except for a minor mention at 14.7.3) until the moment when Nero sends a letter to the Senate. As in the earlier speechwriting episodes, Tacitus mentions Nero's communication first as if it were his own: "He withdrew to Naples and sent a letter to the Senate (*litterasque ad senatum misit*), the gist of which was (*quarum summa erat*) that an assassin had been discovered with a weapon, Agermus, one of Agrippina's closest freedmen, and that she had paid the penalty out of guilt for the crime she had prepared" (14.10.3). Tacitus summarizes the letter in some detail:

He added charges retrieved from further back: that she had hoped for a share in imperial power, for the praetorian cohorts to swear an oath to the words of a woman, and for the same disgrace to the Senate and people, and that after she met with no success, hostile to the soldiery and the Senate and the people she had argued against the donative payment and grain gift and had plotted dangers for distinguished men. By what effort of his had it been accomplished that she did not burst into the Senate house, that she did not deliver responses to foreign nations (*quanto suo labore perpetratum, ne inrumperet curiam, ne gentibus externis responsa daret*)! By oblique attacks on the times of Claudius he transferred all the misdeeds of that regime to his mother, arguing that it was to the people's good fortune that she had been eradicated (*publica fortuna exstinctam referens*). For he also told about the shipwreck (*namque et naufragium narrabat*). (14.11.1–2)

At this point Tacitus breaks off from his summary to indicate the audience's reaction to the mention of the shipwreck, asking, "Who could be found so obtuse as to believe that this was a chance event (*quod fortuitum fuisse, quis adeo hebes inueniretur, ut crederet*)? Or that a single man with a weapon was sent, by a shipwrecked woman, to break through the cohorts and fleets of the emperor?" (14.11.2). Only then does he explain the significance of this controversy and the text's composition by Seneca: "Therefore not Nero anymore, whose monstrosity exceeded any complaint that anyone might make, but Seneca was held in infamy, because with such a speech he had written an open acknowledgment" (*ergo non iam Nero, cuius immanitas omnium questus anteibat, sed Seneca aduerso rumore erat, quod oratione tali confessionem scripsisset*, 14.11.3).

As with the funeral speech for Claudius, the audience's reaction to the text being delivered intrudes before the text itself can be

concluded, but in this instance the special irony consists in the fact that Seneca's crime of writing looms larger in the audience's imagination than does Nero's act of matricide. And what is it about Seneca's writing that causes such a scandal? Not so much the fact of his complicity with Nero's actions as the poor quality of his writing (cf. "with such a speech," *tali oratione*) which insulted the audience's intelligence by asking them to believe something so implausible as that the shipwreck was "a chance event" (*fortuitum*). In a passage of the *Epistulae morales*, a work written several years after this event, Seneca himself observes: "Having a shipwreck or being run over by a wagon, albeit serious, are rare events (*rari sunt casus*); each day brings danger (*cotidianum periculum*) from man to man" (*Ep.*103.1). It is plausible that he wrote this with a sense of retrospective irony, given that Agrippina's death was not only a homicide but also was precipitated by a shipwreck. We cannot be certain that Tacitus knew this particular passage, or even that he would have read it this way, but the passage at least illustrates the kind of reasoning (both commonsense and cynical) that Tacitus suggests the senators felt had been violated in Nero's letter.

Whose voice might be heard in the text of the letter itself? A sentence from the letter happens to be quoted by Quintilian: "That I am safe I neither believe nor rejoice" (*saluum me esse adhuc nec credo nec gaudeo*, *Inst.* 8.5.18). This arises as part of Quintilian's discussion of concise sentence forms (*sententiae*), illustrating the device of "doubling" (*geminatio*), since "believe" and "rejoice" give two conflicting potential characterizations of Nero's state of mind. It is worth noting, incidentally, other qualities of the language, such as its heavily spondaic rhythm (the penultimate syllable being the only short syllable). The *sententia* also gives us a taste of the kind of first-person rhetoric in which Nero's letter was couched. It is worth noting that while the letter was written by Seneca and sent by Nero to the Senate, by the end of Tacitus' account it becomes a "speech" (*oratio*); indeed it must have been read out in the Senate and in a third voice, neither Nero's nor Seneca's. This presentation no doubt heightened the sense of epistolary distance and of polyvocality. Tacitus' rendering of the speech partly through description and partly through indirect discourse, I suggest, allows him to retain the hint of Seneca's voice in the letter. For example, the attack on the Claudian era in particular seems to cohere more closely with the experiences of Seneca than of Nero.

The strongest allusion to Seneca, however, comes in the section of the speech exclaiming, "By what effort of his had it been accomplished that she did not burst into the Senate house, that she did not deliver responses to foreign nations" (*quanto suo labore*

perpetratum, ne inrumperet curiam, ne gentibus externis responsa daret! 14.11.1). As we saw above with “his clemency” (*clementiam suam*), the reflexive adjective is ambiguous in a ghostwritten speech. In this case we are able to cross-reference this detail with Tacitus’ very precise description of the same event in the previous book. While Nero was listening to ambassadors from Armenia, Tacitus had explained, Agrippina “was getting ready to ascend the emperor’s tribunal and preside alongside [Nero], except that Seneca, while the others were transfixed by fear, advised him to go to meet his mother as she approached (*nisi ceteris pauore defixis Seneca admonuisset, uenienti matri occurrere*). Thus ... was disgrace headed off” (13.5.2). This shows that *suo* is more suggestive of Seneca working through Nero than of Nero himself. This is perhaps the closest Tacitus brings us to the experience of an audience which listens to Nero – and hears Seneca.

(iii) The Interview

Later in Book 14 the dramatic paired speeches of Seneca and Nero show either the sundering of their voices from one another or their hopeless entanglement, depending on how one looks at it. The upshot of their exchange and their tightly matched arguments can be illustrated by comparing Seneca’s attempt to retire and to return Nero’s gifts of wealth, “You still have your strength and the control of the highest power for so many years; we older friends can demand back some rest” (*superest tibi robur et tot per annos summi fastigii regimen: possumus seniores amici quietem reposcere*, 14.54.3), with Nero’s inversely structured response insisting that he needs Seneca to stay on: “But your age is strong and adequate to things and their enjoyment, and we are walking the first steps of our rule” (*uerum et tibi ualida aetas rebusque et fructui rerum sufficiens, et nos prima imperii spatia ingredimur*, 14.56.1). The exchange recalls a tragic *agon* and it has obvious similarities (and may allude) to the confrontation between the Seneca and Nero characters in the anonymous play *Octauia* (Oct. 435–592), which in turn echoes and overturns the advice Seneca gives to Nero in the *De clementia*. Tacitus also retraces the advising relationship of the *De clementia*, having Seneca ask, “Am I, arisen from equestrian and provincial origins, counted among the foremost citizens?” (*egone, equestri et prouinciali loco ortus, proceribus ciuitatis adnumeror?* 14.53.5). This echoes the question Seneca had prompted Nero to ask of himself: “Have I, of all mortals, found favor and been chosen to take the place of the gods on earth?” (*egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum, qui in terris deorum uice fungerer?* *Clem.* 1.1.2; cf. Braund 2009, 160). Although the Tacitean Seneca’s main argument is to emphasize the incommensurability

between the mere “studies fostered, as it were, in the shade” (*studia ... in umbra educata*) that he has given Nero and the monetary gifts that have been lavished on him in return (14.53.4), Nero aspires to demonstrate by the very eloquence of his reply the value of Seneca’s gifts: “The fact that I can match your rehearsed speech on the spot I consider the first sign of your gift to me (*quod meditatae orationi tuae statim occurram, id primum tui muneris habeo*): you have taught me to address surprise situations as well as foreseen ones ...” (14.55.1). Although scholars have drawn varying conclusions about the amount of Senecan diction and rhetoric echoed in these chapters, the overall impression is of a Seneca–Nero dyad tightly bound by insincere expressions of gratitude.

Who wins this *agon* – in the eyes of Tacitus’ readers, or even in the eyes of Neronian audiences, if word had reached them of such an encounter? The question is inherently problematic, but Tacitus encapsulates the tense outcome in the statement, “Seneca gave thanks, as all conversations with a despot end” (*Seneca, qui finis omnium cum dominante sermonum, grates agit*, 14.56.3). This generalizing comment locates the scene in the broader history of sage–tyrant encounters, and the giving of thanks belongs within the series of thanksgivings (*gratulationes*) in the age of Nero which, as O’Gorman observes, “flatten out differences, moral, historical, or authorial” (O’Gorman 2000, 154). The thanksgiving also recalls the *De ira*, where Seneca mentions a man who had survived to a ripe old age despite being in a royal court: “When someone asked him how he had come by that rarest of things in a court, old age, he replied: ‘By accepting injuries and saying thank you’ (*‘iniurias’ inquit ‘accipiendo et gratias agendo’*, *Ira* 2.33.2). O’Gorman plausibly suggests that this resonance guarantees Seneca’s “literary dominance” over Nero (2000, 153). Although Seneca in the *De ira* is careful to criticize any thanksgiving that is motivated exclusively by a desire for self-preservation, he returns to the motif more than once as a way to characterize a philosophical acceptance of misfortune. In the *De tranquillitate animi*, he suggests that when Fortune asks for her gifts to be returned (as Nero effectively does here), we should say: “I give thanks for that which I took possession of and I had” (*gratias ago pro eo quod possedi habuique*, *Tranq.* 11.2). Seneca’s fullest account of thanksgiving, however, and the one most parallel to the exchange with Nero, concerns the case of Julius Canus mentioned later in the same work: Canus, when condemned by Caligula, had responded, “Thank you, most excellent emperor” (*‘gratias,’ inquit, ‘ago, optime princeps,’ Tranq.* 14.4). Speculating on what Canus meant by this, Seneca distinguishes a range of equally courageous messages:

I am uncertain what he intended, for many possibilities occur to

me. Did he want to be insulting and to show what great cruelty it was in which death was a gift? Or did he reproach him for the madness he showed every day? (For those whose children had been slain and whose goods had been confiscated were in the habit of giving thanks.) Or did he willingly receive it as if it were freedom? Whatever it is, he replied with great dignity.

(*Tranq.* 14.5)

These parallels from Seneca's writings do not necessarily entail that Tacitus himself portrays Seneca in the interview as acting "with great dignity" (*magno animo*) rather than engaging in flattery. Rather, the Senecan intertexts increase the possibility of audiences' reading his "thank you" as an empowering statement. This is confirmed by an anecdote from the next book of the *Annals*, in which Tacitus mentions that Nero boasted that he had been reconciled with Thrasea Paetus, "and Seneca congratulated Caesar" (*ac Senecam Caesari gratulatum*, 15.23.4), for in this instance Tacitus describes the outcome of Seneca's response: "As a result, for these distinguished men glory and danger began to grow" (*unde gloria egregiis uiris et pericula gliscebant*, 15.23.4). It is easy to see here an anticipation of the forced suicides of Seneca and Thrasea Paetus, whom Tacitus portrays accepting death with the same thankfulness and tranquillity of mind as Julius Canus once had under Caligula.

(iv) Paulina in the Death Scene

When Tacitus arrives at Seneca's death later in Book 15, his description of the death scene incorporates several reflections of Seneca's authorial identity, just as his accounts of the deaths of Lucan and Petronius allude to their own writings (*Ann.* 15.70.1, 16.19.2; cf. Connors 1994). By this time Tacitus' focus has, for obvious reasons, turned away from Seneca's role as an imperial advisor to his independent reputation as an individual in relationship to his friends and the members of his household, especially his wife Paulina. In sketching the death scene, Tacitus draws upon Seneca's own writings, and especially *Epistulae morales* 70, in which Seneca had pondered the different factors influencing one's deliberations about suicide: from that letter Tacitus takes the term *necessitas ultima* ("final necessity") with which he refers to Nero's suicide order and also his portrayal of Seneca asking his friends, "what had happened to their philosophical precepts and their rationality rehearsed for so many years against impending misfortunes?" (*ubi tot per annos meditata ratio aduersum imminetia?* *Ann.* 15.61.4, 62.2; cf. *Ep.* 70.5, 27). In more general terms the Tacitean Seneca's advice for his friends, that he was giving

them “the only thing he still had, and yet the finest: the image of his life” (*quod unum iam et tamen pulcherrimum habeat, imaginem uitae suae*, 15.62.1) and that they should strive to keep it in their memory, can be taken to allude to the example of Seneca’s life and to the lessons of his writings. Tacitus also presupposes that the reader will have access to a published version of the words which Seneca, after opening the veins in his arms and legs, dictated to his scribes, saying that “he dictated a considerable amount to them, which was published in his words and which I refrain from adapting” (*pleraque tradidit, quae in uulgus edita eius uerbis inuertere supersedeo*, 15.63.3). Tacitus, then, avoids competing with this manifestation of Seneca’s own dying voice to which his readers have independent access and instead focuses on other details of the scene that are revealing in their own right.

The detail to which Tacitus devotes the most attention is Paulina’s involvement in the scene, and indeed her involvement has its own implications for the death of Seneca the writer. When Seneca first turns from his friends to his wife, his attempts to console her, telling her “to endure her longing for her husband by noble consolations, contemplating a life conducted through virtue” (*in contemplatione uitae per uirtutem actae desiderium mariti solaciis honestis toleraret*, 15.63.1), are reminiscent of his consolatory writings, especially those addressed to women (*Consolatio ad Marciam*, *Consolatio ad Heluiam*). Readers of Seneca’s works would also be familiar with Seneca’s examples of marital devotion in his now mostly lost *De matrimonio* and with his direct mention of Paulina in *Epistulae morales* 104, where he explains how Paulina’s concern for him “makes [his] own well-being a concern for [him]” (*mihi ualetudinem meam commendat*, *Ep.* 104.2) and disinclines him from suicide. Tacitus goes to some lengths here not only to explain that Paulina insisted on joining Seneca in the act of suicide but also to depict Seneca’s endorsement of her wish:

Then Seneca, unopposed to her glory and also moved by love, not wanting to leave his one and only beloved vulnerable to abuse, said: “I had shown you the means of soothing life, but you prefer the honor of death. I won’t stand in the way of your good example (*non inuidebo exemplo*). Let us both be equally steadfast in this brave exit, but let there be greater renown in your ending (*sit huius tam fortis exitus constantia penes utrosque par, claritudinis plus in tuo fine*).” After this, they opened their arms with the same stroke of the blade.

(*Ann.* 15.63.1)

In this sole direct quotation of Seneca in the death scene, Tacitus shows Seneca characterizing his and Paulina’s death with motifs recalling his philosophical writings, especially exemplarity, dying

bravely, and self-consistency, and also linking Paulina's death with the "renown" (*claritudo*) that Tacitus has connected with Seneca's reputation as a writer ever since his first mention of him in Book 12. Dio is more terse, simply stating that Seneca "wished to kill his wife Paulina as well, saying that he had persuaded her to scorn death and to desire departure with him. And he opened her veins also" (62.25.1). Dio thus implies that Seneca received some blame for Paulina's involvement in the death scene, and he goes on to hint at her good fortune in being predeceased by Seneca and then recalled from the brink of death (62.25.2). Tacitus' account, dwelling on Paulina's suicidal resolve, resonates with the role of the Roman wife as both encouraging and participating in her husband's death in several of the major suicides he documents in the *Annals* (for example, at 6.29.4) and also serves as an interesting contrast to Plato's portrayal of Xanthippe in the death scene of Socrates, where the wife had been deemed incompatible with the philosopher's courageous confrontation of death (Pl., *Phaed.* 60a–b).

Tacitus, however, reveals a number of complications with Paulina's involvement. The first concerns her removal from the room in which Seneca is dying, ostensibly "so that he would neither break her spirit with his own suffering nor himself lose his ability to endure from seeing her torment" (*ne dolore suo animum uxoris infringeret atque ipse uisendo eius tormenta ad impatientiam delaberetur*, 15.63.3), but with the implication that Paulina would be at risk of occluding Seneca's philosophical reputation, to which he immediately turns his attention in her absence, commencing the dictation of his final words to the scribes.

The second complication concerns the details of Paulina's survival. On the one hand Tacitus presents her as a devoted widow, living on for a few more years "earning praise for her fidelity to her husband's memory (*laudabili in maritum memoria*) and with face and limbs blanched to a pallor that showed that much of her vital spirit had drained out" (15.64.2) and indeed the role of Nero in her rescue – "to avoid inflating the outrage over his cruelty, he ordered her death to be interrupted" (*ne glisceret inuidia crudelitatis, <iubet> inhiberi mortem*, 15.64.1) – might be understood as a minor victory for Seneca as the one who had once taught Nero the importance of clemency. On the other hand Tacitus states that when Paulina's slaves and freedmen bound up her wounds,

whether they did so without her knowledge is uncertain (*incertum an ignarae*). For since the public is ready to assume what is more disreputable (*nam ut est uulgus ad deteriora promptum*), there were those who believed that for as long as she feared that Nero was

implacable she had sought the fame of sharing death with her husband, but that after she was given reason to hope for a milder outcome (*oblata mitiore spe*) she was won over by the enticements of life. (15.64.1–2)

To this extent Paulina, rather than demonstrating the efficacy of Senecan philosophy in her attempt at suicide or commemorating his image in her blood-drained face, demonstrates instead the fragility of Seneca's moral authority – its potential for subversion. Indeed, as Dyson has noted, Tacitus' allusion to Paulina's criticism by the "public" (*uulgus*), "since the public is ready to assume what is more disreputable," is suggestive for the way in which Seneca's dictated words, themselves "given to the public" (*in uulgus edita*, 63.3), may have been received (Dyson 1970, 77). The special attention given to Paulina by Tacitus is certainly caught up with his portrayal of the different ways in which Seneca's death scene is shaped by, and shapes, his reputation as a writer.

5. Conclusion

Tacitus, then, puts the reader in a position to assemble the narrative of Seneca as a complicated elite actor in the history of the early principate and more particularly as someone whose writings influenced Tacitean style and were an integral part of the actions by Seneca which Tacitus commemorates.

Tacitus was not the only author, however, to adopt this kind of approach to Seneca: the *Octavia* play, which dates to the decades after Seneca's death and which Tacitus probably knew, had already portrayed Seneca as a leading character in the court of Nero, employing a dramatic form that owed much to the language and thought of Senecan tragedy and alluding to specific works, such as the *Consolatio ad Heluiam* and the *De clementia*, that had been pivotal in Seneca's career. Indeed, we may end where we began, by sampling the Seneca character's first entrance onto the stage, remembering and regretting the moment of his recall from exile:

Why, intemperate Fortune, fawning on me

with deceitful face, when I was happy with my lot,

did you raise me on high, so that being welcomed into the lofty citadel,

I might fall more heavily and confront so many fears?

I would have been better to remain hidden far from the evils of
resentment

remote among the rocks of the Corsican sea,

where my mind was free and had its own authority

and was always available for me as I renewed my studies.

(Oct. 377–384)

We do not have the space here to unpack this fascinating dramatic moment in which Seneca is brought back from the dead before the eyes of a Flavian audience to wax nostalgic over the picture of intellectual contentment in exile he had once painted in his *Consolatio ad Heluiam*. But with its echoes of Senecan tragedies and prose writings, the *Octavia* has much to tell us about the literary apparatus which Tacitus and his readers would have at their disposal as they took Seneca's measure.

NOTE

1. Translations are the author's unless otherwise indicated.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A useful starting point for further exploration is to compare Tacitus' account in *Annals* Books 12–15 with what survives of Books 60–62 of Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (see http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Cassius_Dio/home.html).

For an assessment of Tacitus' overall portrayal, see Dyson (1970). O'Gorman (2000, 147–161) is useful on Seneca's role as speechwriter and on the interview scene. The language of the interview speeches is analyzed in detail by Woodman (2010), Adams (1973), and Syme (1958) 334–335. The letter on Agrippina's death is discussed and its attribution to Seneca is questioned by Alexander (1954). On the death scene, excellent close readings are offered by Edwards (2007, 110–113) and Hutchinson (1993, 263–268). The significance of the death scene and Paulina's death attempt in the construction of Seneca's profile is the focus of Ker (2009). Other problems and negative characteristics of the Tacitean Seneca are raised by Alexander (1952) and Henry and Walker (1963).

The comprehensive biography of Seneca, with close attention to Tacitus and other sources, is Griffin (1992); see also her chapter

“Imago Vitae Suae” reprinted in Fitch (2008, 23–58). Seneca’s renown, and his profile as an exemplary figure in first-century Rome, are explored in Habinek (2000). Seneca’s own writings are available in several series, including the Loeb Classical Library, the Oxford World’s Classics, and *The Complete Works of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* (Chicago University Press). For a sampling of recent literary approaches to these writings, see the articles collected in Bartsch and Wray (2009), Fitch (2008), and Volk and Williams (2006). Seneca’s approach to his aristocratic audience in the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* is the subject of the influential article by Leach reprinted in Fitch (2008, 264–298). On the *De clementia* see also the new edition by Braund (2009). For the *Octavia*, see Boyle (2008) and Ferri (2003).

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PART IV: Intertextuality

16

Annum quiete et otio transiit

Tacitus (Ag. 6.3) and Sallust on Liberty, Tyranny, and Human Dignity

Christopher B. Krebs

Among Tacitus' contemporaries, interest in Sallust thrived: recognized by Martial as the *primus Romana ... in historia* ("the first in Roman history," 14.191.2), he earned Quintilian's ambivalent praise for his *immortalis uelocitas* ("undying rapidity," *Inst.* 10.1.102, mod.), the subtleties of which required the kind of interpretive skills that Gellius' potential tutor, the self-proclaimed *unicus lector enarratorque Sallustii* ("one and only reader and interpreter of Sallust," 18.4.2, mod.), offered. If anybody, Tacitus may lay claim to this title. Evidence of his engagement with his famous predecessor, whom he praised as *rerum Romanarum florentissimus auctor* ("the brightest flower among the authors of Roman affairs," *Ann.* 3.30.2, trans. Woodman 2004), is ample and pervasive, so much so that Syme, studying Tacitean "borrowings," opted to forgo the obvious ones in favor of those he considered more interesting (1958, 728). Since Syme's influential and controversial work (Dench 2009, 395–399; Toher 2009, 325–328), studies of the two historians' relationship have turned to good account the increasingly nuanced discussion of intertextuality, allusion, reference, and, most recently, intratextuality (Thomas 1986; Fowler 1997; Hinds 1998; Sharrock 2000). Concomitantly, many more Tacitean "borrowings" have been proposed (summarily Ducroux 1978, 295 n. 12; Hellegouarc'h 1991, 2423–2428; see also Woodman 1992), from one-word allusions (e.g., Barry 1990) over adaptations of entire

sections (e.g., Guerrini 1977; Lausberg 1980, esp. 415–419) to the assimilation of ideas (e.g., Koestermann 1973, esp. 803–809; Ducroux 1978). Of the *opera minora*, the *Agricola* has received the greatest attention, a “rich quarry for the parallel seeker” (Mendell 1921, 53; see also Perret 1954; Petersmann 1991, 1794–1800; Soverini 2004, 7 n. 8); yet the twofold Sallustian presence in *Agricola* 6.3 which shall be discussed here seems to have escaped proper notice.

In more detail I shall propose that the expression *annum quiete et otio transiit* (“he passed the year in inactive quiet”) contains a pointed allusion to the opening sentence of Sallust’s *Catilinarian Conspiracy* (*Cat.* 1.1), while, more generally, revealing Tacitus’ assimilation of a formative thought found in Lepidus’ oration (*Hist.* 1.55). In conjunction they point to the cardinal flaw of the sedative principate and the corruptive influence of a *malus princeps*.

1. Bovine Quietude

Agricola knew how to serve under one-man rule, not only under Domitian but already at the beginning of his career under Nero. After his conspicuous apprenticeship in Britannia, the vigorous success of which Tacitus renders with a string of historical infinitives and active verbs (Ag. 5; Bews 1987, 208–209; Perrochat 1935, 264), he spent his time in inconspicuous quiet back in Nero’s Rome:

mox inter quaesturam ac tribunatum plebis atque ipsum etiam tribunatus annum quiete et otio transiit, gnarus sub Nerone temporum, quibus inertia pro sapientia fuit. idem praeturae tenor et silentium; nec enim iurisdictio obuenerat.

(Ag. 6.3)

The following year between his quaestorship and tribunate, as well as the year of the tribunate itself, he passed in inactive quiet, knowing those times of Nero when indolence stood for wisdom. His praetorship was passed in the same consistent silence; for no judicial duty had come his way.

(trans. Church and Brodribb 1942, mod.)

In the proximity of Nero, instead of pursuing his “desire for glory,” Tacitus’ future father-in-law passed his time in “inactive quiet” and “silence” (Ag. 5.3: *gloriae cupido*, is often read as an allusion to Sal. *Cat.* 7.3: *tanta cupido gloriae*, as Tacitus does not use *cupido* elsewhere in the *opera minora*; cf. Gerber and Greef 1962, s.v. *cupido*, *cupiditas*, and Lausberg 1980, 422 n. 21; this remains likely even though, as Tony Woodman points out to me, the phrase occurs also in Sen., *Ep.*

74.21; for other possible resonances see Birley 2009, 51). The use of *transire* is noteworthy. If employed in regard to time, it is frequently construed intransitively, often with the temporal expression as subject, as in Publilius' *uita, quae sine odiis transiit* ("a life that passed without hatred," *Sent. Q* 47), or Lepida's admonitory words to Messalina: *transisse uitam neque aliud quam morti decus quaerendum* ("her life had passed ... and there was nothing to be sought except glory in her death," *Ann.* 11.37.3, trans. Woodman 2004). To express "passing time" the verb *transigere*, which Tacitus uses twice in the *Agricola* (4.2, 18.5), would have been a more conventional choice but he is said to have avoided here for the sake of variation (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967; Heubner 1984, both *ad loc.*; on *uariatio* see Sörbom 1935, who, however, does not discuss this instance, incompatible as it is with his definition of *uariatio* on p. 2). But further scrutiny uncovers that the transitive use of *transire* with a temporal object is singular in Tacitus (Gerber and Greef 1962, s.v. *transeo*). Precedents are few, as the material at the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* shows: Seneca the Younger uses *transire* three times with *uita* (*Dial.* 1.4.1; 1.4.3; *Ep.* 45.12), twice with *hiems* (*Ep.* 83.23; 90.16), once with *hora* (*Apocol.* 2.3). Yet in all but two Senecan instances the verb precedes the noun, and nowhere is *transire* further qualified by an ablative. The only Latin author to use *transire* exactly as Tacitus later would is Sallust (Guerrini 1977, 492–495, compares the two passages, yet without substantiating an allusion):

Omnis homines, qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus, summa ope *niti decet*, ne **uitam silentio transeant** ueluti pecora, quae natura prona atque uentri oboedientia finxit.

(*Sal., Cat.* 1.1)

All persons who are enthusiastic that they should transcend the other animals ought to strive with the utmost effort not to pass through a life of silence, like cattle, which nature has fashioned to be prone and obedient to their stomachs.

(*trans.* Woodman 2007).

Sallust's *uitam transire* – unprecedented, as Vretska (1976, *ad loc.*) points out – is a noteworthy expression for several reasons and likely to have caught Tacitus' eye (cf. Krebs 2008). He does not borrow word for word, but, with the help of a key term, "signals" his engagement, while adjusting the duration and elaborating on the mode (Ducroux 1978, 296; cf. also Mendell 1921, 58; Syme 1958, 357). Such adaptation instead of quotation is in character. At the same time, he retains the three central parts in order: direct object, ablative(s) of mode, and finite form of *transire* (for a similar syntactical parallel – between Tacitus and Caesar – see Lausberg 1980, 415).

More can be adduced in favor of an intertextual connection (for a discussion of the criteria of intertextuality, see Ash 1997; for a “grammar of allusion,” see Wills 1996, 15–41). Other words and collocations of Sallust’s incipit have left traces in the immediate context of the adapted expression. Agricola’s marriage with Domitia Decidiana was *ad maiora nitenti decus ac robur* (“a distinction and support for a man ambitious of advancement,” Ag. 6.1, trans. Church and Brodribb 1942, mod.). The juxtaposed *nitenti decus* sounds like a distorted echo of Sallust’s similarly contiguous *niti decet*. Second, even though Tacitus replaces Sallust’s *silentio* with *quiete et otio*, he employs the noun immediately in the following sentence to qualify Agricola’s similarly lackluster pretorship, retroactively specifying the binomial: *idem praeturae tenor et silentium* (“His praetorship was passed in the same consistent silence”; the textcritical uncertainty in this sentence surrounding *tenor* has no bearing on the word in question, *silentium*; contrast Heubner 1984 with Soverini 2004, both *ad loc.*). Sallust’s expression has been split between two sentences in Tacitus: they form what has been described as a “complementary pair” (Wills 1996, 27).

The semantics of *silentium* are of interest too in so far as it may signify a state of “silence about” rather than “silence by” (cf. OLD 5 and 2), in meaning passive rather than active. The latter can be found dozens of times in Tacitus’ opus, often highlighted in antithesis, as in *Annals* 1.75.4: *silentium et paupertatem confessioni et beneficio praeposuer* (“[they] preferred silence and poverty to confession and generosity,” trans. Woodman 2004; generally on silence in Tacitus: Strocchio 1992). The former, passive, meaning, however, does not occur anywhere in Tacitus except for here, according to Gerber and Greef, who classify this use as the single instance under “transl[ate] i. q. *stille, ruhe*” (1962, s.v.; Ag. 38.2 *uastum ubique silentium* seems similar but is not, as it contrasts with the Britons’ expressions of loss and despair from the night before: *uirorum mulierumque ploratu ... uocare integros ...* which should have led to a classification under “α) c. *oppos. et sim.*”). Such a passive meaning is suggested by three circumstances: first and foremost, before his return to Rome, Agricola was shown to be busily active in Britannia, activities of which Tacitus provides his account (Ag. 5) – no reference to any speaking can be found. Second, *silentium* qualifies the *praetura* rather than the *praetor*: even though such metonymy is common, a first reading of this collocation suggests that nothing was heard “about” his praetorship rather than “from.” Third, it is telling that Tacitus concludes this first *opus minus* with the assurance that *Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit* (“Agricola, his life told and entrusted to posterity, will survive,” Ag. 46.4), clearly emphasizing the communicative part involved in this survival and resuming, as is well known, in ring

composition a crucial point of the beginning of his work, i.e., the active remembrance of glorious deeds. His father-in-law would live on, would enjoy a *memoria quam maxime longa* (Sal., *Cat.* 1.3, mod.), because his life's accomplishments were talked about. But no such accomplishments garnish the obscure years in question. There is but silence.

Four reasons may, however, be adduced for an accordant active silence. Most generally, the prologue emphasizes the severe restrictions on speaking enforced under Domitian's rule (Ag. 2 and 3.2, see below). Second, as a public official, Agricola would naturally count public speaking among his duties, and Tacitus' explanation for Agricola's obscure praetorship – no judicial duty had come his way – emphasizes this point: he was not given the opportunity to pronounce a verdict. More particularly, *dictio* ("speaking") appended by a causal particle (*enim*) lexically activates its antonym, "being silent." Last and perhaps least, as tribune in 66, Agricola had as colleague Arulenus Rusticus, who "with less discretion [i.e., than Agricola] contemplated exercising his veto in the trial of Thræsea" (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 150). While his colleague wanted to break the silence and speak up, no such attempt is known of Agricola.

It seems safe to conclude that Agricola's *silentium*, oscillating between "obscurity" and "muteness," is equivocal; as such it is singular in Tacitus' extant work. It is, however, anticipated in the incipit of the Catilinarian conspiracy, where *silentio* is similarly pregnant (Woodman 1973).

In addition to these linguistic arguments – concerning the expression in question as well as its immediate context – there is the semantic enrichment effected by the suggested allusion. Tacitus' recognition of "the necessity of the principate" does not curtail his readiness to disparage it (Klingner 1961, 502 and 506; on Tacitus' view of the principate, cf. esp. Pelling 1993). Such disparagement is partly accomplished by allusiveness, discussed by Walker as one of Tacitus' four rhetorical strategies to insert non-factual materials and characterized as the description of an event "in connection with another set of circumstances, or persons, or ideas, which make us see the immediate subject in a new light" (1952, 66 and 74–76; cf. also Byrne 1999, 344). Such a new light is shed on Agricola's situation by the pointed allusion in *Agricola* 6.3.

In Sallust, *silentium* differentiates humans from beasts. In the background stands the commonplace in Greek (e.g., Isoc., *Pan.* 48, probably Sallust's model, cf. Perrochat 1949, 69) and Roman (e.g., Cic., *Inu.* 1.5) thought that it is the faculty of speech that makes for human excellence and the equally widespread belief that active accomplishments achieve the desirable glory of being spoken of. If,

however, a life is spent *silentio*, the difference collapses, and human beings degenerate to cattle (*ueluti pecora*): the simile, later reiterated by Catiline in his hortatory address to his followers (*Cat.* 58.21), is derogatory. Because of the contrastive comparison with beasts, *uitam transire* carries a negative sense, emphasizing lack of activity, implying inhumanness. With his pointed evocation of Sallust's simile, Tacitus insinuates that in the presence of bad emperors, even great men like Agricola lose their humanity, are reduced to cattle (for a different reading see Guerrini 1977, esp. 492–495).

Many others, including Tacitus, would fare no better: their survival under Domitian was secured *per silentium* (*Ag.* 3.2), active silence. If speech defines humanity, in an environment characterized by its suppression (*Ag.* 2.3) survivors pay a steep price: *Nostri superstites* is the paradoxical expression applied to this situation (*Ag.* 3.2; cf. Seel 1972, 251–258 for a personal meditation on Tacitus' experience). Given the boldness of this expression, perhaps the euphoric *nunc demum redit animus* lends itself to a bolder understanding too: not just “the spirit is returning” but, now that the silence is broken, human life itself (*Ag.* 3.1; cf. Leeman 1973, 203–204)?

Tacitus elaborates on the commonplace of human excellence *qua* eloquence (cf. esp. Cic., *de Orat.* 1.32), encountered at the beginning of his model's first work. Its conspicuous first sentence, with its emphasis on the significance of silence and unusual usage of *transire*, not only invited a pointed allusion but may have provided a formative thought on the deeper significance of silence to the preface of the *Agricola*.

2. In Peace You Rest Unfree

Tacitus' choice of the binomial *quiete et otio* to replace Sallust's *silentio* is peculiar, given their subsequent equation (*idem ... silentium*). Four observations on *otium* (and partly *quies*) help to understand what, other than variation, this particular turn of phrase might accomplish.

Agricola's *otium* in Rome stands in marked contrast to his military apprenticeship in Britain (*prima castrorum rudimenta in Britannia*, *Ag.* 5.1). Unlike others, he took no liberties: neither licentious nor slothful (*nec licenter ... neque segniter*), he did not turn his duty into amusement nor did he try to obtain leave for pleasure (*ad uoluptates et commeatus*); far from it, he strove to master the territory, to observe and follow the best, and to acquire a reputation, seized, as he was, by a desire for military glory so disagreeable to his times (*ingrata temporibus*, *Ag.* 5.3; possibly an allusion to Cic., *Orat.* 35 *tempora ...*

inimica uirtuti, cf. Birley 2009, 47). When, years later in 70, he returned to Britain as *legatus legionis*, his virtues found room to flourish once more (*habuerunt uirtutes spatium exemplorum*, Ag. 8.2) and so secured him a share in glory (*nec extra gloriam*, Ag. 8.3). The contrast between busy times spent in Britain and vigor pent up in Rome throws his *otium* into relief: a lack of dynamism, further emphasized by the vicinal mention of *inertia*, suitably rendered as *geschäftsllosigkeit* (Gerber and Greef 1962, s.v. *otium*; cf. *TLL*, s.v. 1175.73–4, *uacatio*, *cessatio ab actionibus*, *occupationibus*, *negotiis*, and 1176.29–30, *spectat ad desidiam*). Agricola would have to embrace such inertia once again later in his career: returning to Rome upon completion of his glorious governorship in Britain, he encountered Domitian’s henchmen who, “knowledgeable about their princeps’ preoccupations,” explicitly recommended *quies et otium* (Ag. 42.2 with Jens 1956, 336). Silent passivity thus characterizes Agricola near Nero and Domitian (perhaps another instance of how, in Tacitus’ historical account, the *Domitian-Erlebnis* expanded into the more distant past; cf. Klingner 1961, 502). In both instances the *otium* embraced does not serve relaxation before the next acts of virtuous vigor but coincides with its dissipation (as the ambivalent nature of *otium* is spelled out in Valerius Maximus 8.8 pr.): it has a negative connotation (but see Borzsák 1984, esp. 422 for a different reading).

Second, in these two instances in Tacitus’ first *opus minus*, *otium* is of “personal ... relevance” (Laidlaw 1968, 47), pertaining to Agricola’s individual behavior. Yet *otium* no less than *quies* belonged to Rome’s political vocabulary: the future *princeps* Nerva had “practiced that discretion which men called ‘quies’ if they approved, otherwise ‘inertia’ or ‘segnitia’ ” (Syme 1958, 2 n. 2; see Mart. 5.28.4; 8.70.1; Plin., *Ep.* 10.58.7; add Pliny’s portrait of Trajan, *Pan.* passim; cf. also the comprehensive discussion by Woodman *ad Vell.* 2.88.2). *Otium*, on the other hand, along with *pax* or *concordia* – and sometimes used synonymously with them – had an even longer and more prominent history in political propaganda, most famously as the “idéal du conservatisme cicéronien” (André 1966, 181; Wirszubski 1954). As such, defined as the negation of socio-political disturbance (cf. *TLL*, s.v. *otium* 1179.21–2), it is used in Maternus’ ambiguous praise of the principate, when he remarks on the “long period of peace, the unbroken calm among the people and the lasting tranquility of the Senate” (*longa temporum quies et continuum populi otium et assidua senatus tranquillitas*, Tac., *Dial.* 38.2). There are several more instances in the *opera minora* where *quies* and *otium* are similarly used as political terms, all of which, as will appear, carry further significance.

Maternus considers the three just-mentioned circumstances in conjunction with the “princeps’ coercive powers” to have pacified

once and for all eloquence along with everything else (*ipsam quoque eloquentiam sicut omnia alia depacauerat*, Tac., *Dial.* 38.2; on *depacare* see Mayer 2001, *ad loc.*). Subsequently, he specifies that the object of their discussion, *eloquentia*, is not an *otiosa et quieta res* but the offspring of “license, which only the ignorant call freedom” (*licentiam quam stulti libertatem uocitant*; on *libertas* in Tacitus: Vielberg 1987, 150–168). This twisted reinterpretation of Cicero’s assertion in the *Brutus* (see Gudeman 1914, 497–499) has led to opposing interpretations – Maternus is sincere to some, ironical to others (see Heldmann 1982, esp. 280) – while its point surely is the revelation of the ambivalent nature of *otium* and *eloquentia* (for Tacitus’ interest in the ambivalence of core human values – *libertas*, *virtus*, *simplicitas* – see Krebs 2005, 99–102). Whichever interpretation is ultimately favored, *eloquentia* is undoubtedly linked to a form of *libertas*, and both disagree with *quies et otium*. A similar antithesis is employed when Tacitus compares the Britons with the Gauls, adding, with a nod to Caesar, that the latter were once great warriors too but “then along with peace came sloth, at the expense of both vigor and freedom” (*mox segnitia cum otio intrauit, amissa uirtute pariter ac libertate*, *Ag.* 11.4). Agricola himself, aware of this correlation, followed up on his military success in Britain with a domestic program intended to impose on the *Britanni* the *quies et otium* the Gauls had already suffered, thus accustoming them to servitude (*Ag.* 21.1; cf. Liebeschuetz 1966, 137). Only the *Germani*, paragons of liberty, resisted: they would seek out war and danger, according to Tacitus, whenever sluggish because of “a long period of peace and inactivity” (*longa pace et otio*, *Ger.* 14.2). A people intolerant of quiet (*ingrata genti quies*, *Ger.* 14.2), they knew how to maintain fortitude and freedom, the latter also expressed at councils, where speakers prevail due to superior advice rather than the power of command (*auctoritate suadendi magis quam iubendi potestate*, *Ger.* 11.2).

The binomial *quies et otium* – and slight variations thereof – occurs frequently in the *opera minora*, a fact indicative of the deeper thematic unity of the minor works (Krebs 2005, 106–110). The synopsis above suggests that it stands in opposition to *libertas*, not least as expressed in speech, and that its eviscerating force appears equally in Rome’s dealing with foreign enemies as in the emperors’ dealings with Romans (for a similar parallel in Tac., *Hist.* 4 see Keitel 1993). They form, as Klingner puts it, an “antinomy,” a variation of which Jens rightly considered constitutive of Tacitus’ general view on history (Klingner 1961, 494; also Jens 1956, 338–339, 352; Borzsák 1966, esp. 55; Liebeschuetz 1966, 138–139).

Wirszubski (1954) argued that the political dimension of *otium* bore on a proper understanding of Cicero’s hope for his personal *cum*

digitate otium. Similarly, even though *quies et otium* primarily describes Agricola's personal situation, it is its political dimension that gives Tacitus' sentence full meaning for it reminds the reader of the individual's dependence upon socio-political ramifications. When Agricola embraced *quies et otium*, he did as compelled by the system that, confronted with the question *libertas an pax* (Tac., *Hist.* 4.67.2, adapted), decided in favor of the latter, thus limiting the space for individual freedom or virtue. The binomial explains the noteworthy change of this man of action, whose behavior here cannot serve as an instance of the not-so-perfect-man (as suggested by Bastomsky 1985, 393; cf. Syme 1958, 538).

One final observation on the binomial may be added. Sallust uses it twice in his extant work: once of the Vagenses, whose public is characterized as "of volatile disposition, rebellious and disaffected, desirous of revolution and hostile to rest and inactivity" (*ingenio mobili, seditiosum atque discordiosum erat, cupidum nouarum rerum, quieti et otio aduersum*, Jug. 66.2, trans. Woodman 2007). These Vagenses resemble Tacitus' *Galli* and *Britanni* but only partly, as their description lacks the all important antithesis between freedom and stability. More relevant seems the second instance in Sallust. In the first book of the *Histories*, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus addresses the Roman people "in the face of Sulla's tyranny" (*aduersum tyrannidem L. Sullae*, *Hist.* 1.55.1). Freedom, individual property, and the right to obey no one but the laws (*libertas et suae cuique sedes, neu cui nisi legibus pareremus*, *Hist.* 1.55.4), successfully defended in the past, have now been lost. All decisions and all power now rest "with one" (*penes unum*, *Hist.* 1.55.13), who claims such arrangement to be necessary for the sake of stability and civil peace (*specie concordiae et pacis*, *Hist.* 1.55.24). The Roman people, Lepidus concludes, may either accept "rest along with servitude" (*otium cum seruitio*), or they may follow him in his preference for "dangerous freedom over quiet servitude" (*potiorque ... periculosa libertas quieto seruitio*, *Hist.* 1.55.26). In any case, "that quiet inactivity with freedom, which many decent men used to prefer over toil with honors, is no more" (*illa quies et otium cum libertate, quae multi probi potius quam laborem cum honoribus capessebant, nulla sunt*, *Hist.* 1.55.9). Confronted with Sulla's tyranny, Romans had to choose between *quies et otium*, on the one hand, and *libertas*, on the other; their union existed no more (note the hyperbaton and the emphasis in *nulla*).

It might be tempting to suggest a Tacitean allusion. But the Thesaurus material reveals that *quies* and *otium*, or their derivatives, occur in proximity quite frequently (e.g., *quietem atque otium*, Cic., *de Orat.* 3.56; *quies aëris et otium*, Sen., *Nat.* 1.2.8; the simple contiguous juxtaposition with *et* occurs less frequently). Then again, the Sallustian

passage, one could add, appears particularly memorable because of its play on Cicero's *cum dignitate otium* (Sest. 98; Fam. 1.9.21; cf. Fam. 1.8.4). But in making a case for a "multiple reference" (Thomas 1986, 193), in limiting one's focus on Sallust, *Histories* 1.55.9, one would miss the deeper significance of Lepidus' speech, for its coherent characterization of Sulla's one-man-rule with its deleterious divorce of individual freedom and socio-political rest consummately anticipates Tacitus' account of Rome under the principate (for a similar observation on Sallust and Tacitus' notion of decadence, cf. Ducroux 1978, 301). In the face of Sulla's heirs, Tacitus' Agricola knew that *quies et otium* was all to be hoped for.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Allen (2000) offers a general overview of studies of intertextuality. More particularly on intertextuality and classical studies (in addition to the authors mentioned in my opening paragraph) Barchiesi (2001) offers thoughtful remarks (esp. 141–154) and thought-provoking case studies (esp. 9–28, 129–140, and 155–162), and Wills (1996, 15–41) outlines "a grammar of allusion." The best discussion of Tacitus as a reader of Sallust remains Syme (1958, 132–143 and 728–732); other studies are discussed or listed in Hellegouarc'h (1991, 2423–2428), Ducroux (1978, 295 n. 12), and Schoenfeld (1884, 3 n. 2).

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“Let us tread our path together”

Tacitus and the Younger Pliny

Christopher Whitton

1. Out of the Silence

C. PLINIVS TACITO SVO S.

nec ipse tibi plaudis, et ego nihil magis ex fide quam de te scribo. posteris an aliqua cura nostri, nescio; nos certe meremur ut sit aliqua, non dico ingenio (id enim superbum), sed studio et labore et reuerentia posterorum. pergamus modo itinere instituto, quod ut paucos in lucem famamque prouexit, ita multos e tenebris et silentio protulit. uale.

Dear Tacitus, You are not being self-congratulatory, and I never write more honestly than when I write about you. Whether posterity will have any thought for us, I cannot say; but we certainly deserve it, not perhaps through our abilities (for that would be arrogant) but through hard work, diligence and reverence for posterity. Let us simply continue along the path we have begun: although it has carried few out into the light of fame, it has brought many out of the darkness of silence. Farewell. Pliny.

Epistles 9.14 is the final instalment in one of antiquity's most notorious one-way conversations. Pliny writes for the eleventh time to his older contemporary Tacitus, replying to a letter in which his friend has apparently expressed anxiety that his pride exceeds his ability. Tacitus fears that he is “applauding himself” like Horace's hated miser (*Sat.* 1.1.66–67) and that Pliny is insincere in his praise. With calm reassurance Pliny assuages his doubts. However the future may judge

us, we are doing the best we can: we must only continue along the path we have begun (a single path: hence my title, “Let us tread our path together”). Few, perhaps, have reached glory, but many have escaped the ignominy of anonymity. With these comforting words and a final, significant pun (*Tacito ... silentio* rings the letter), Pliny inscribes in lapidary style a last effort to draw his quiet friend with him out of the silence.

A timid Tacitus comforted and encouraged by an assured Pliny? The personalities and relationship projected in this letter have little in common with the orthodox view of this pair, often considered the most distinct of contemporaries. Their political careers have much in common (Birley 2000a, 2000b, 5–17): a few years apart in age, these two (probably) provincial “new men” worked their way up the senatorial *cursus* under the Flavians, held a single suffect consulship in the new regime of Nerva and Trajan, acquired a major priesthood, and governed an eastern province. Yet their literary footprints seem all too different. The magisterial Tacitus (the story goes) condemns the foibles of emperors and subjects alike in his devastating historical exposé of the principate, while the affable Pliny all too transparently papers over the cracks of autocratic society in his sunny Trajanic world. True to his name, Tacitus has not a word for Pliny in all his writings; Pliny addresses more letters to Tacitus than to anyone. Tacitus, in short, is a great mind and author of a “possession for all time” (Thucydides 1.22.4), Pliny at best a second-rate survivor in the lottery of manuscript tradition. Can they really be treading the same path?

For many readers of Tacitus, Pliny is a convenient but disposable witness. His “private letters” (*Epistles* 1–9) provide virtually the only clues to the chronology of the *Dialogus* and *Histories*. They reveal something of the political-oratorical career of which Tacitus himself says so little – the date of his consulate (*Ep.* 2.1.6), a senatorial prosecution in 100 (*Ep.* 2.11), the circle of admirers (*Ep.* 4.13.10), his part in senatorial canvassing (*Ep.* 6.9). They complement the grand austerity of his narrative style with a fragmented portrait of a Tacitus who laughs (*Ep.* 1.6), banters (*Ep.* 8.7), and boasts (*Ep.* 9.23). Yet many have been content to accept at face value Pliny’s confession of inferiority. As a young man, he writes, “I desired to follow you, to be and be considered ‘second but by a long way’ to you” (*te sequi, tibi longo sed proximus intervallo’ et esse et haberi concupiscebam*, *Ep.* 7.20.4, quoting *Aen.* 5.320). Heaping Tacitus with praise throughout his letters, Pliny all too obviously hangs onto his coat-tails, inflating his reputation together with that of his older friend (for the strategy see *Ep.* 6.17.4 with Riggsby 1998, 88 and Gibson 2003, 251–252). Accordingly, Syme’s (1958, 112–120) skepticism of a close

relationship between two men one of whom he idolized, the other he despised, is still widely shared.

This orthodoxy has come under attack from two angles. Griffin plays down differences between Tacitus and Pliny and emphasizes similarities, concluding with a provocative image of two close friends “sitting together in Pliny’s villa, cheerfully sipping their Falernian wine, swapping clichés about life and morals, and, from time to time, patting each other appreciatively on the back” (Griffin 1999, 156). Meanwhile, the vindication of epistolography as a genre, and of Pliny as a writer, where professions of humility should not be taken literally, has redefined the *Epistles* as a work of subtle and rich complexity, in which Pliny’s engagement with Tacitus, not least, is creative and muscular (Marchesi 2008, 97–206; Gibson and Morello forthcoming, ch. 5). Similarly his *Panegyricus*, the speech of praise to Trajan delivered in 100, has won rehabilitation as a form of political engagement more sophisticated than craven flattery (e.g., Morford 1992; Braund 1998); so too *Epistles* 10, the correspondence with Trajan: no mere document of (in)competence, but a dynamic projection of provincial governance (Stadter 2006; Woolf 2006; Noreña 2007). Recent work on Tacitus, meanwhile, has emphasized the dangers of taking *his* construction of personal authority at face value (Sailor 2008). We should be as cautious, then, in evaluating Pliny’s “Tacitus” as in accepting either writer’s self-representation. How willing a companion is Tacitus on Pliny’s journey to the light of fame?

2. Between Oratory and History

An important part of that question is quite what the journey is. For us, Pliny is the paradigmatic imperial orator, thanks to the *Panegyricus* and to his self-crafted testimony in the *Epistles*. Tacitus, by contrast, is primarily a historian; the orator who finds brief expression in the *Dialogus* is a second-order figure. How self-evident, though, was this dichotomy when they were writing? In part Pliny’s letters support it, as he supplies source material for the *Histories* in the first “Vesuvius” letter, narrating the death of his uncle Pliny the Elder in 79 (*Ep.* 6.16) and, again, this time unprompted, describing his bravery in one of the political trials of 93 (*Ep.* 7.33). In both letters he predicts “the eternity of your writings” (*scriptorum tuorum aeternitas*, *Ep.* 6.16.2), “that your histories will be immortal” (*historias tuas immortales futuras*, *Ep.* 7.33.1) – wrongly: the *Epistles* have lasted, the greater part of the *Histories* not. Yet if these letters present Tacitus the historian, Pliny’s

longest letter to him concerns a question of oratorical style (*Ep.* 1.20), and the two celebrations of literary exchange (*Ep.* 7.20 and 8.7) seem to show Tacitus sending Pliny work “as one orator to another” – that is, orations (Syme 1958, 113, who however assumes that this work is the *Dialogus*). Tacitus the historian, then, is interwoven in the collection with Tacitus the orator.

It is telling that his last named appearance in the *Epistles* is ambiguous. Tacitus has told Pliny how a Roman knight and literary connoisseur asked his identity at the Circus (*Ep.* 9.23.1–3). “You know me, and from my *studia*,” Tacitus had replied, to which came the response, “Are you Tacitus or Pliny?” Tacitus’ immodesty, both in his riddling reply to the stranger and in retailing the anecdote, matches Pliny’s delight that “our names are ascribed to literature, as if they are literature’s names, not people’s” (*nomina nostra quasi litterarum propria, non hominum, litteris redduntur*, *Ep.* 9.23.3), as he offers premature confirmation that the hopes for mutual fame expressed in *Epistles* 9.14 have been fulfilled. Sherwin-White’s commentary here is prescriptive: “as commonly in Pliny *studia* means forensic oratory” (1966, 506; so too Syme 1958, 112). The phrase certainly parallels an earlier remark to Tacitus usually taken as a reference to oratory: “it will be rare and remarkable that two men ... of some note in the sphere of literature (*non nullius in litteris nominis*) ... have mutually encouraged each other’s work (*alterum alterius studia fouisse*)” (*Ep.* 7.20.3, a letter also echoed in *Ep.* 9.14). Elsewhere, however, Pliny uses *studia* of literary composition more broadly, as when he celebrates the *studia* of his polymath uncle in *Epistles* 3.5 or when he calls Titinius Capito, who encouraged Pliny himself to write history (*Ep.* 5.8), a great patron of *studia*, “literature” (*Ep.* 8.12.1). So although it may be reasonable to see the *studia* of *Epistles* 9.23 as oratory, the wording certainly does not rule out a reference to the *Histories*. The *Epistles* reject an easy separation of historian and orator; all that is certain is that here, once again, Pliny is assiduously presenting their literary efforts as complementary and communal.

Of course the dichotomy of history and oratory is in any case open to deconstruction. On Tacitus’ side one may invoke Cicero’s famous definition of history as “this one especially oratorical genre” (*opus ... unum hoc oratorium maxime*, *Leg.* 1.5) or note the obvious importance of speeches in the *Histories* and *Annals*. Even if he had given up forensic oratory after the *Dialogus* – a common but hardly justifiable hypothesis – he had abundant scope to practice his oratorical skills within historiography. As for Pliny, his *Epistles*, not least the “source” letters to Tacitus, have historiographical ambitions of their own, as he crafts for posterity miniature narratives from his own and others’ lives, whether as an “insurance policy” against the loss of his other

compositions (Mayer 2003) or as complement – or competition – to those of a historian like Tacitus (Traub 1955; Ash 2003; Marchesi 2008, 171–189). When Pliny writes of their journey into posterity, then, the signals are mixed. Their shared pursuit may be oratory and/or it may be their distinct but parallel efforts to address posterity. These ambiguities offer a warning against imposing any essentializing division between historiography and epistolography: as we will see, these two genres prove in Tacitus’ and Pliny’s hands to have more in common than such a simple dichotomy would imply. History, epistles and oratory, the political and literary lives of Tacitus and Pliny, are intertwined in a complex nexus – in which Pliny, as we will see, is not the only binding force.

3. Dialogues

Tacitus’ letters to Pliny, like those of all Pliny’s correspondents except Trajan, are lost. Tacitus’ side of the conversation, however, is not wholly inaudible, as we will see first in the case of verbal allusion and then in the treatment of some of their mutual acquaintances. It is well known that Pliny repeatedly alludes to the language of Tacitus, making him an extraordinary witness to the otherwise barely attested ancient reception of Tacitus’ writings (Haverfield 1916; Zecchini 1991). Yet this is a two-way conversation, in which Tacitus is not simply a model for Pliny but responds in kind. The direction of allusion between the *Panegyricus* (written not before 100) and the *Agricola* (dated to 98) is clear: Tacitus’ praise of a model general becomes the model for Pliny’s praise of a model *princeps* (Mesk 1911, 91–94; Durry 1938, 61; Bruère 1954, 162–164, who adds two phrases from the *Germania*). So too the reworking of the *Agricola* in *Epistles* 8.14 (Whitton 2010). However, the *Panegyricus* also shares more than the odd phrase with the *Annals*: in crafting the nightmare world of Tiberius’ principate in particular, Tacitus reaches repeatedly for Pliny’s portrait of the “tyrant” of their own times, the emperor Domitian (Bruère 1954, 174–176). Depicting Rome’s state of fear at Titius Sabinus’ trial, for instance – “wherever he cast his eyes, wherever his words fell, there was flight and desertion (*fuga uastitas*)” (*Ann.* 4.70.2) – Tacitus takes his piquant final word-pair from Pliny’s evocation of more recent fear, as he tells Trajan “your audiences [sc. unlike Domitian’s] are not followed by flight and desertion (*fuga et uastitas*)” (*Pan.* 48.3). In a senatorial debate Tiberius excuses Drusus from giving his opinion first “so that the rest would not have an obligation to assent (*adsentiendi necessitas*)” (*Ann.* 3.22.4); the phrase

recalls Pliny's account of senators under Domitian: "rooted to the spot, terrified, ... suffering that mute and sedentary obligation to assent (*adsentiendi necessitas*)" (*Pan.* 76.3). Since Tacitus was writing the *Annals* in all probability after Pliny's death, there is no question that Pliny is now in turn a model for Tacitus. (For another hint of Pliny in the *Annals*, see Woodman 2009b, 34–35.)

In the time between *Agricola* and *Annals* uncertainty reigns, as scholars try to prove that *Dialogus* precedes *Epistles* 1 (Murgia 1985) or the opposite (Woodman 2009b, 32–33), that *Histories* 1 reworks material from the *Panegyricus* (Bruère 1954, 168–173), or vice versa (Büchner 1964), and so on. Apart from the impossibility of proving allusion by rigid rules (*pace* Woytek 2006), such arguments face three problems. First is the dating of Pliny's *Epistles* (and *Panegyricus*). Even if any individual item in the collection was originally a real letter, it was edited when Pliny integrated it into its book. Although the books proceed in roughly chronological sequence, there is no proof that they were released one by one: Book 1's letters, for instance, have "dramatic dates" in the years 96–98, but could have been published (and indeed written) years later. In any case there may have been a further stage of editing when Pliny completed his nine-book collection, which scholars increasingly view as a unified, artistic whole. If so, a letter in Book 1 may have been edited or even written as late as 109/10 (Syme's 1985 date for Book 9). In Tacitus' case, too, the assumption of serial publication is open to question: Can we be certain that he completed *Histories* 1 before moving on to later books and never revised it later? Finally, and most important, the very notion of "publication" is a misleading anachronism in a society where, as Pliny so abundantly attests, elite literature was routinely disseminated through recitation and exchange of manuscripts before wider publication followed (Mayor 1886, 173–182; Starr 1987; Johnson 2000). If Pliny and Tacitus have a phrase in common – and they very often do – it does not follow that one "published" it before the other heard or saw it. A safer view is that in this enclosed literary society, in which the highest value was placed on the crisp formulation, the novel turn of phrase, the paradoxical *sententia*, Pliny and Tacitus were engaged, at least in terms of language, in a mutual process of influence (Durry 1938, 60–66).

This reciprocity does not stop, however, at verbal intertextuality. Tacitus may never name Pliny in his works (and why would he?), but he does mention other men closely connected to him. One is Pliny the Elder, celebrated by his nephew for his prodigious scholarship (*Ep.* 3.5) and his death in the name of science (*Ep.* 6.16), and known to us for his massive *Natural History*. The loss of the later *Histories* leaves us unable to judge how Tacitus treated the elder Pliny in his own account

of Vesuvius' eruption. He does, however, name him four times as a source, a total unsurpassed by any other author (*Hist.* 3.28; *Ann.* 1.69.2, 13.20.3, 15.53.3). In the last of these he treats him quite roughly, rejecting his testimony on one aspect of the Pisonian conspiracy as *absurdum* ("absurd" or, with Woodman 2004, 330, "incongruous"). Modern scholars have seized on this, as well as a supposed (but highly unlikely) mocking allusion to the *Natural History* in *Annals* 13.31.1, to support a view that Tacitus scorned Pliny the Elder as much as some modern readers do (Syme 1958, 291–293; Devillers 2003, 20). Yet the explicit assessment and faulting of sources – who are also, of course, competitors – is part and parcel of Tacitus' self-promotion as an impartial, independent historian (Marincola 1997, 217–257); and their "errors" are also expressive of the doubts and uncertainties which he makes integral to his history (Pelling 2009). If Tacitus really took such a dim view of Pliny, it is remarkable that he did not express it more openly, not least given his open pose of antagonism toward Flavian historians in general (*Hist.* 1.1, 2.101). In fact the number of citations, not to mention the "extensive affinity between Tacitus and Pliny in vocabulary and phraseology" (Goodyear 1981, 89), suggests that Tacitus gave Pliny more credit than is generally allowed. Whether he was paying any regard to the younger Pliny's feelings is, of course, hard to say. That his most aggressive treatment is late in the *Annals*, when Pliny was almost certainly dead, leaves the possibility open.

Two other members of Pliny's family circle feature in Tacitus' historical works. Calpurnius Fabatus, his grandfather-in-law and, after Tacitus, the favorite addressee of the *Epistles*, earns brief mention in *Annals* 16.8.3, when he is dragged into the trial of Lucius Silanus as a co-defendant. He escapes along with two senators, "as less important" (*quasi minores*) than the bigger targets in this climactic round of Neronian bloodletting. The equestrian Calpurnius has no major role to play on Tacitus' senatorial and imperial stage (though we should never forget that Tacitus himself, like Pliny, began life as an equestrian). Nevertheless, this cameo puts him, as a near-victim of Nero's delators, neatly on the side of right. A third and more complex case concerns Verginius Rufus, Pliny's guardian, who attained an exceptional third consulate before his death in 97. A far more prominent political figure than Calpurnius or Pliny the Elder, he earns substantial but not always flattering mention in the *Histories*. Here we may see a more vigorous tussle between Tacitus and Pliny over the reputation of a man whom Pliny presents as nothing short of a substitute father.

As governor of Upper Germany in 68, Verginius was a key player in the events of that year. He suppressed the revolt of Julius Vindex

against Nero and subsequently declared his support for Galba, although his own army wanted Verginius himself for emperor. The details of Verginius' actions are confused and contested (Hainsworth 1964; Shotter 1967; Levick 1985). What matters here is that while Pliny (*Ep.* 2.1, 6.10, 9.19), like Plutarch (*Galba* 6) and Dio (63.25), glorifies Verginius for his magnanimous refusal of the principate, Tacitus alone sheds doubt on his altruism, implying that he did at least hesitate before backing Galba (*Hist.* 1.8.2, 1.52.4). He also undercuts Verginius' dignity in his account of a second attempt by the soldiers to declare him princeps: no impressive speech, but a furtive escape through the back door (*Hist.* 2.68.4). A possible intertext with Pliny makes Tacitus' treatment particularly pointed. Pliny writes that Verginius "attained the highest honor available to a subject [namely, a third consulate], when he had refused the honor of being emperor (*cum principis [fastigium] noluisset*)" (*Ep.* 2.1.2). As Tacitus surveys the provinces early in the *Histories*, he comes to Germany and Verginius: "whether he had been unwilling to rule was uncertain (*an imperare noluisset dubium*); what everyone agreed was that rule had been given him by the soldiers" (*Hist.* 1.8.2). Tacitus' primary interest here is to depict the uneasy fears which engulfed the army and Roman observers alike; nevertheless, his wording is provocative. In particular, in choosing *noluisset* over *uoluisset* ("no one knew whether he had wanted to rule", a more natural formulation) he appears to be casting doubt specifically on claims like Pliny's, that Verginius had refused power outright. That the word *noluisset* appears only here in Tacitus' and Pliny's works, though not conclusive, is suggestive: do we see Tacitus ticking off Pliny, exposing the rose tint in his spectacles?

The question must remain open, not least because it is equally possible that Pliny has framed his denial in response to Tacitus: the relative chronology of *Epistles* and *Histories* is, as we have seen, far from certain. What is clear is the difference of emphasis: Pliny tells an unambiguous tale of glorification, while Tacitus wraps Verginius in the doubt and uncertainty which is so important to his representation of the convolutions of 68–69 (a narrative from which few players emerge unscathed). Pliny's project of commemoration continues in *Epistles* 6.10 – a letter provocatively juxtaposed with a note to Tacitus, *Epistles* 6.9 – and in *Epistles* 9.19. In both letters he quotes Verginius' self-composed epitaph (which has survived only thanks to this transcription), and in the latter he recalls a fine declaration of Verginius to the historian Cluvius Rufus: he was content to be criticized by Cluvius and others, since that was precisely the freedom he had won for them. Are these later letters a response to Tacitus? Chronology allows it (Pliny had seen or heard some of the *Histories* certainly by Book 9, perhaps by the dramatic date of Book 6). If so,

Pliny reasserts control over Verginius' reputation, accepting the historian's unflattering account and endorsing it: in writing "with no favor and without hate (*neque amore ... et sine odio*)" (*Hist.* 1.1.3), Tacitus was doing precisely what Verginius wanted.

Pliny the Elder, Calpurnius Fabatus, and Verginius Rufus: three men revered in the *Epistles*, subjected to more nuanced treatment in *Histories* and *Annals*. The differences are characteristic: Pliny's primary interest is (auto)biographical praise, Tacitus' is historiographical method and analysis. Nevertheless, we have seen some first signs of convergence as well as divergence, of lively and sometimes piquant dialogue. We move now beyond the treatment of individuals to a bigger thematic nexus with broader ramifications in Pliny's and Tacitus' construction of history, in which their own identity as senators and writers is most urgently at stake: avenging Domitian's dead.

4. The Problem of Survival

After Domitian's assassination in 96, Pliny and Tacitus faced the same political and ethical dilemma. Survival was to be celebrated, but also represented failure. The victims of Domitian, as of Nero and other "tyrants" before, had acquired considerable cachet as heroes who had died in the name of freedom, a cachet preserved in their (misleadingly monolithic) modern designation, "the Stoic martyrs." How could a survivor, who all too clearly had *not* incurred the tyrant's wrath, match this prestige? How could he distance himself from an autocrat under whom his own career seemed to have progressed all too well? Tacitus and Pliny were not the only members of the elite presented with this problem: Nerva and Trajan, to name just two, had fared well enough under Domitian. It is Tacitus and Pliny, though, whose writings are most clearly marked by this preoccupation. The standard modern response emphasizes the gulf between a Pliny who seeks cheap kudos by aligning himself with the martyrs and dancing on the grave of the tyrant now safely dead, and a sober, pragmatic Tacitus who openly confesses his Flavian career (*Hist.* 1.1.3) and condemns the martyrs for their pointless deaths. Yet this tells only part of the story.

It is true that Pliny works hard (and transparently) to associate himself with the martyrs, both with claims that he himself survived Domitian's "thunderbolts" only by a whisker (*Ep.* 3.11.3, 7.27.14) and by emphasizing his personal connections with Arulenus Rusticus and Helvidius the Younger, two of several senators condemned in the glut

of treason trials in 93. *Epistles* 2.18 shows him finding a teacher for Arulenus' orphaned sons, *Epistles* 4.21 expresses his personal grief at the deaths of Helvidius' daughters, while *Epistles* 3.16, 7.19, and others advertise his intimacy with Helvidius' stepmother Fannia and recount tales of her and her relatives' heroism. Most prominently, Pliny parades his efforts in 97 to take *ultio*, revenge, for the deaths of Arulenus and Helvidius, in each case by hounding a senator associated with their prosecution: these bravado performances form the substance of *Epistles* 1.5 and *Epistles* 9.13, of which more in a moment. Tacitus, by contrast, seems to take a more combative attitude to the martyrs, as he carves out a niche for his conformist father-in-law Agricola among the glorious dead of Domitian's principate (Saylor 2008, 11–24). For many, *Agricola* 42.3–4 is the kernel of his political credo, with its fierce attack on the “self-seeking death” (*ambitiosa mors*) of those who resist tyrannous emperors “in a pointless show of independence” (*inani iactatione libertatis*). Of course this is defensive aggression, as Tacitus justifies the failure of Agricola (and of himself, and of Trajan) to fall victim to Domitian; it is misleading to quote this rhetorically conditioned assault as a statement of belief, not least as the *Agricola* itself also bursts with indignation at the executions of 93 (Ag. 2.1, 45.1). Nevertheless, a milder vein of criticism tempers his later narrative of Thrasea Paetus' glorious resistance to Nero (*Ann.* 13–16), and the *Histories* show similar ambivalence over the *libertas* of Thrasea's son-in-law Helvidius Priscus the Elder, an independent-mindedness which would eventually lead to his exile and execution under Vespasian (Oakley 2009, 190–192). Where Pliny is set on raising himself up to the height of the martyrs, Tacitus' approach is apparently to knock them off their pedestal, or at least to make it wobble.

In another respect, though, it is Tacitus who seems the more determined to position himself on the side of right. If martyrs posed one problem, delators posed another. *Delatores* were the malicious prosecutors who collaborated with “bad” emperors, initiating treason charges against innocent senators and profiting from their condemnation. Although *delatio*, “denunciation,” was a standard and necessary element of the Roman legal system, the tendentious designation of *delatores* as wicked and their victims as innocent is routine in Trajanic literature (Rutledge 2001, 2007). A memorable passage of the *Panegyricus* (34–35) depicts the symbolic scourge of delators effected by Trajan on his return to Rome in 99, a gesture to distance the new emperor from the crimes of a former regime: Pliny celebrates the reversal whereby the delators who once were feared now themselves must live in fear. In the letters he reveals a more nuanced reality: on the one hand he pursues malefactors in his quest

for *ultio* for Arulenus and Helvidius; on the other he acknowledges the reconciliation of delators under Nerva (*Ep.* 4.22) and elsewhere mentions *delatio* as a normal legal activity (*Ep.* 2.16.3, 6.31.5, 10.96–97).

Tacitus, by contrast, is forceful and persistent in his attacks on delators. From the evocation of their deadly power in 93 in the *Agricola* (Ag. 45.1) to the vicious performance of Cossutianus Capito and Eprius Marcellus in the trials of Barea Soranus and Thrasea Paetus which end the unfinished *Annals* (16.21–33), he repeatedly damns this “species of humanity invented for public disaster and never adequately curbed even by punishments” (*Ann.* 4.30.3; cf. 1.74.2). Of course Tacitus gives play to the complexities of *delatio*, as for instance when one delator denounces another (*Hist.* 2.10), and *Agricola* 45 gains much of its bite from its alignment of the Senate as a whole with the delators: in their failure to resist, they were as guilty as if they themselves had attacked the victims (“it was our hands which dragged Helvidius to the executioner”). Yet even this rhetoric of communal guilt depends for its force on the underlying dichotomy between innocent senators and noxious delators, which Tacitus reinforces even as he deconstructs it. The dichotomy is clearest, his denunciation most emphatic, in the proem of the *Histories*. Here delators take pride of place as the ultimate evil of Flavian Rome:

nec minus praemia delatorum inuisa quam scelera, cum alii sacerdotia et consulatus ut spolia adepti, procurationes alii et interiorem potentiam, agerent uerterent cuncta odio et terrore. corrupti in dominos serui, in patronos liberti; et quibus deerat inimicus per amicos oppressi.

(*Hist.* 1.2.3)

The rewards of the delators were no less hated than their crimes: taking as spoils priesthoods and consulates, civil offices and palace power, they drove all before them, turning the world upside down with hatred and terror. Slaves were bribed against masters, freedmen against patrons; and anyone who lacked an enemy was destroyed by his friends.

Like Pliny in the *Panegyricus*, Tacitus emphatically separates the implied side of right, the authorial outrage which the right-minded reader is invited to share, from the side of wrong, the wicked delators who precipitate the cataclysmic social collapse of Flavian Rome, a collapse in which even the most canonical human antithesis of friend–enemy is overturned. Indignation blends with self-defense as the survivor stakes his moral ground: Tacitus condemns the delators, if anything more obsessively than Pliny, thereby asserting the gulf that divides him from them. This first glance at Pliny’s and Tacitus’

response to the question of martyrs and delators suggests already that Pliny is not the only one working to dissociate himself from the wrongdoers of Domitianic Rome. Yet the intrication of Tacitus with Pliny's politics of revenge goes further than this: Pliny binds him intimately into his epistolary *ultio* and, as we shall see, Tacitus does not fail to respond.

5. Pliny's Revenge

In his *ultio* for Arulenus Rusticus and Helvidius Priscus, Pliny selects as his victims two bit-players in their prosecutions, both safely dead by the time of the *Epistles*' completion. Publicius Certus was a senator of Pliny's age who had physically assaulted Helvidius at his senatorial trial in 93. In 97 Pliny launched an oblique attack on Certus in the Senate; he wrote it up as a speech for publication, perhaps with the title *De Helvidi Vltione*, "The Avenging of Helvidius." The reader of the *Epistles*, who has no access to the speech, is teased with repeated mention of it (*Ep.* 4.21.3, 7.30.5 and perhaps 1.2.6), until Pliny finally narrates the whole occasion in the climactic *Epistles* 9.13, the last major political letter of the collection (Whitton forthcoming). Back in Book 1 Pliny picks out another senatorial malefactor, Aquilius Regulus, who had "supported" the prosecution of Arulenus Rusticus and "delighted" in his death (*Ep.* 1.5.2). Set shortly after Domitian's death, *Epistles* 1.5 presents Pliny, empowered by the return of rightful government, deliberating over the best way to avenge Arulenus and punish Regulus. Nothing comes of these deliberations, but Pliny's epistolary tactics are more subtle: for one thing, the forward-looking *Epistles* 1.5 opens a frame which *Epistles* 9.13, with its analogous revenge, will eventually close; for another, prosecution of Regulus in the Senate is replaced by character assassination in a series of letters which damn and mock him as an immoral delator, senator and *captator* (legacy hunter), as the ultimate bad orator – in every way the reverse of Pliny's ideal mold (Hoffer 1999, 55–91; Gibson and Morello forthcoming, ch. 2).

Tacitus is unmentioned throughout *Epistles* 1.5 and 9.13. It can hardly be accidental, however, that these two framing presentations of Pliny's exemplary role as oratorical avenger of the innocent are placed side by side with the first and last letters to his fellow orator and writer (on the importance of juxtaposition in the *Epistles*, only now beginning to be understood, see Marchesi 2008, 12–52; Whitton 2010, 130–134; Gibson and Morello forthcoming). We have seen how *Epistles* 9.14 calls on Tacitus to join Pliny on his path to immortality, a

significant postscript to *Epistles* 9.13, which celebrates what Pliny presents as his greatest senatorial triumph; but the fact that this repeats a pattern from Book 1 demands closer consideration. By contrast with *Epistles* 9.14, *Epistles* 1.6 looks anything but serious. “Dear Tacitus, You’ll laugh, and you’re entitled to. I, the Pliny you know, have caught three boar, and splendid ones at that. ‘Yourself?!’ you say. Yes, myself – not that I wholly abandoned my laziness and tranquillity ...” (*Ep.* 1.6.1). The opening combination of humor and self-deprecation marks the letter as informal, light-hearted, and trivial – all of which, thanks to the merciless miscellanies of Latin for novices, seals Pliny’s fate for many as the amiable fool of Latin literature. There is more to this letter than meets the eye, however, as scholars have begun to recognize: *Epistles* 1.6 is clearly in responsion with *Epistles* 9.10, another letter to Tacitus about hunting boar; what is more, *Epistles* 9.10 (certainly) and *Epistles* 1.6 (possibly) allude to the *Dialogus*. Yet amid the long-running dispute over the details of these intertextualities (see the guide to further reading below), the further responsion of *Epistles* 1.6 with *Epistles* 9.14 has been ignored altogether.

The humor of *Epistles* 1.6 and the seriousness of *Epistles* 9.14 should not mislead: these are two complementary projections of a close personal bond. This is evident in a detail which generates ring-composition to these first and final letters of the cycle. When Pliny’s first hunting letter extols *silentium* to a man called Tacitus it is a droll touch (Woodman 2009b, 32), but we have seen that the same name-play returns, now in a much graver context, to seal *Epistles* 9.14. Like Tacitus himself (Ag. 2.2 *tacere*, 3.2 *silentium*), Pliny takes that expressive name (Hedrick 2000, 144, 153) and makes it central to his identity, encircling Tacitus’ eleven letters with an aura of silence. Second, there is the pattern of long *ultio* letter followed by note to Tacitus. This pattern is not confined to *Epistles* 1.5–6 and 9.13–14. *Epistles* 7.19, where Pliny develops his intimacy with the surviving members of Helvidius’ family, precedes one of his best-known letters to Tacitus, with its famous paean to their literary partnership, *o iucundas, o pulchras uices!* (“delightful, splendid exchange!” *Ep.* 7.20.2). *Epistles* 8.7, a more light-hearted homage to reciprocity, again follows a long political letter, this time not about Domitian’s victims, but excoriating the Senate’s self-debasement under Claudius in a striking display of indignation (Whitton 2010, 136–138). Four times, then, Pliny appends a note to Tacitus to a substantial letter in which he features as the scourge of senatorial failings. This is no coincidence, and the last word of *Epistles* 8.7 confirms it. Pliny writes that he will edit the work Tacitus has sent him with no fear, since Tacitus currently has nothing of Pliny’s on which to “avenge” himself

(*ulciscaris*). As we learn to appreciate the depths of Pliny's humor, we see that even in this picture of Pliny and Tacitus at play, the all-important project of *ultio* is not far below the surface.

Pliny's deliberate and meaningful use of these juxtapositions becomes clearer when we recognize the subtle connections which bind *Epistles* 9.13 and 9.14 (allusion to Vergil: Marchesi 2008, 36–9), *Epistles* 8.6 and 8.7 (jokes about the Saturnalia after a letter featuring Claudius, the *Saturnalicus princeps*), and also *Epistles* 1.5 and 1.6. Near the end of *Epistles* 1.5, Pliny observes that Regulus, still rich and influential, is *dyskathaireton* (*Ep.* 1.5.15), a rare Greek word meaning literally “hard to topple” or “hard to bring down” (compounded from the verb *hairein*, “to catch”). Pliny's first action in *Epistles* 1.6 is *apros tres ... cepi*, “I caught three boars.” Do we see here a substitute catch? Pliny is quite capable of bilingual puns (e.g., *Ep.* 2.2.1, 2.11.23): he may not have toppled Regulus in real life, but metaphorically the *Epistles* have him caught, as Pliny prosecutes his campaign of epistolary calumny. Such details are typical of Pliny's minute artistry in assembling his collection, but they also underline the force with which he repeatedly connects the *ultio* theme to Tacitus. In the case of *Epistles* 1.6, to write off the frivolity of Pliny's boar jokes is to miss a crucial layer of meaning.

Several readers have felt that *Epistles* 1.6 is addressed to Tacitus not just as friend but as author of the *Dialogus*. This suggestion gains strength from a broader look at Book 1 (Murgia 1985, 181–184), in which the longest letter is a tract on oratory addressed to Tacitus (*Ep.* 1.20) and one of the shortest is a rare note to Fabius Justus, dedicatee of the *Dialogus* (*Ep.* 1.11), and also from the juxtaposition with *Epistles* 1.5 (which just happens to feature Justus' other brief appearance in Book 1). For that letter emphasizes not only Regulus' political malevolence, but also his championing of modern oratory. He had mocked Pliny for his emulation of Cicero and alleged that he was not “content with the eloquence of our age”; Pliny retorted that indeed he was not and turned the conversation to Regulus' efforts to endanger him under Domitian (*Ep.* 1.5.11–13). Regulus crops up again in *Epistles* 1.20 as the advocate of brevity and of a violent style, a straw man in Pliny's case for long orations (*Ep.* 1.20.14–15; the fifth letter back from the end of the book, as *Epistles* 1.5 is fifth from the start). It is hard not to see a resemblance between the delator Regulus – advocate of modern oratory, aggressive speaker and defender of brevity – and the Aper of the *Dialogus*, the only interlocutor in that work to deny that oratory has declined, to advocate brevity (*Dial.* 19–20), and to hold up as exemplary two notorious Flavian delators, Vibius Crispus and Eprius Marcellus (*Dial.* 8).

Syme (1958, 109) saw the similarity and identified Aper as “a

purified and sympathetic Regulus.” The qualification is important: Aper, as his recent defenders have stressed, is not a straightforwardly deauthorized character (Champion 1994; Goldberg 1999; Dominik 2007; *contra* Dammer 2005). As a provincial “new man” who has made his name through oratory, he is arguably a better match for Pliny or Tacitus (who claims him as a teacher) than for the nobly born Regulus, and his denial of oratory’s decline, though hardly endorsed by Tacitus as narrator, is integral to the dialogue’s development (Luce 1993; Levene 2004). Yet his association with Vibius and Eprius is problematic. These individuals are the targets of several snipes in the *Histories* (2.10.1, 2.53.1, 2.95.3; on Book 4, more below). In addition the intertext between Aper’s awed description of their influence, in *Caesaris amicitia agunt feruntque cuncta* (“in their friendship with the emperor they drive and carry all before them,” *Dial.* 8.3) and Tacitus’ parallel phrase *agerent uerterent cuncta* in the *Histories* proem (quoted above) is a delicate but devastating touch.

The *Dialogus* does not lend itself to simple distillation, but one point which emerges is the connection it identifies between modern oratory and (Flavian) *delatio* (Winterbottom 1964). Only Aper makes it explicit, but this establishes the context for the speeches that follow, allowing the reader to see the oblique condemnation of delators in Messala’s program for old-style education and in Maternus’ assertion (not without irony) that all orators are redundant under an enlightened monarch. Tacitus’ own response to this and other dilemmas thrown up in the *Dialogus* is hard if not impossible to extract for inspection, not least thanks to the work’s blurred temporalities, straddling its dramatic date in the mid-70s and the date of Tacitus’ staged report of the conversation to Fabius Justus twenty-five years later (for two differing responses, see Williams 1978, 26–50; Brink 1993). Yet he himself shows no sign of abandoning his oratorical career after writing it, to judge from *Epistles* 8.7 (well after the date of the *Dialogus* by any reckoning); this makes it hard to sustain the persistent view that the *Dialogus* is inevitably or even intentionally offensive to Pliny *qua* orator (Syme 1958, 112–115; Murgia 1980, 121–122; Marchesi 2008, 133–134). There are certainly differences between the presentation(s) of oratory in the *Dialogus* and that in *Epistles* 1: where Aper is tainted with *delatio*, Regulus is immersed in it; where Tacitus is evasive, Pliny is firm in tying the oratory of delators to Regulus, creature of the Domitianic regime, and presenting in himself a new oratory for a new principate. Of course the narrative of decline is present in Pliny too: despite his predominantly cheery disposition, he regularly laments in time-honored Roman style the moral failings of modernity, not least in oratory (e.g., *Ep.* 2.14; cf. Döpp 1989; Lefèvre 2003 = 2009, 93–101). This does not, however,

abrogate the claim to a successful career in the present for Pliny any more than it does for Tacitus – least of all when there is game like Regulus to be hunted. These two active orators seem to be agreed on one thing at least, that *delatio* is no commendable path for the Nervan or Trajanic advocate.

If *Epistles* 1.5–6 engage with Tacitus on the politics of oratory, *Epistles* 9.13–14 focus, if anything more sharply, on the oratory of politics. *Epistles* 9.13 is the final large-scale instalment of Pliny's project to write his own history in letters, and the scene is now the Senate itself. Although he still tells a tale of righteous revenge, this later narrative reveals a more nuanced picture of senatorial politics under Nerva than the sunny Book 1 allowed (Hoffer 1999, 9, 27; Gibson and Morello forthcoming, ch. 1). Indeed, Pliny's heroism in avenging Helvidius depends on the lively atmosphere of danger: with bold determination he faces down the hecklers who call for reconciliation (*salui simus qui supersumus*, "let those of us who survive be safe," *Ep.* 9.13.7), rejects the warnings of friends that he has "made (him)self conspicuous to future emperors," and forces a debate on the behavior of Publicius Certus in 93. Though this is no formal trial, with no formal judgment (Certus does, however, fail to win his anticipated consulate), Pliny claims a triumph as he reports the congratulations he received: he alone had freed the Senate of the unpopularity it had earned by colluding to forgive guilty senators "in a sort of mutual dissimulation" (*Ep.* 9.13.21). Where in *Epistles* 1.5 the foil to Pliny's virtue was Regulus, here his exemplarity is set off by the shortcomings of the Senate as a whole: the voice of self-serving pragmatism, the call to live and let live, is audible but rejected, as Pliny insists on his heroic *ultio*.

This is the climax of Pliny's self-projection as the ideal senator for the new regime. In juxtaposing it with his last letter to Tacitus, he makes a concerted effort to associate his consular colleague with this political, oratorical, and autobiographical project. That this is only the last of several such juxtapositions makes the bond all the clearer. The familiar question, however, recurs: is Tacitus a willing associate in this project of Pliny's? *A priori* we should hesitate to believe that Pliny would have been so bold, in letters published in Tacitus' lifetime, as to invent any such association from nothing – but we have better reason to suppose reciprocity, in the fourth book of the *Histories*.

6. Tacitus' Revenge

Early in *Histories* 4 Tacitus narrates the first senatorial meetings of

Vespasian's principate in December 69 and January 70. Here we witness the abortive stirrings of *libertas*, figured in terms of prosecuting Neronian delators, before it is crushed by Vespasian's representatives in Rome, Domitian and Mucianus. As a meditation on *ultio*, it inevitably evokes the analogous events of 96–97, but at a tantalizing distance: as in the *Dialogus*, these debates throw up questions which Tacitus as narrator refuses to answer. Two exchanges stand out. In the first (*Hist.* 4.5–8), Helvidius Priscus the Elder challenges Eprius Marcellus, the delator responsible for Thræsea Paetus' death in 66; Eprius parries with a lecture on the Senate's common guilt – he was just one of that Senate which had been slaves together (*se unum esse ex illo senatu, qui simul seruierit*, *Hist.* 4.8.3, words curiously evocative of the sibilant voice of reconciliation in *Ep.* 9.13.7, *salui simus qui supersumus*) – and on the proper limits of senatorial independence under a principate (Pignon 1992; Keitel 1993). Eprius' speech in particular fascinates, as Tacitus puts pragmatic sentiments, which accord all too well with his Agricolan manifesto for moderation, into the mouth of a vicious speaker whom elsewhere he depicts in harsh terms (especially *Hist.* 2.95.3 and *Ann.* 16.28–29). The resulting irony is characteristically evasive, but one thing emerges clearly in the ensuing narrative: just as the hypocritical Eprius is motivated by the need for self-preservation (*Hist.* 4.7.1), so his success in evading Helvidius is owed to the self-interest of his fellow senators, who side with him rather than risk damage to their own reputation (*Hist.* 4.9.1; cf. 4.6.1). The rebuke is implicit but clear: the Senate as a whole has been found wanting.

A similar rebuke shapes the book's second panel of senatorial debates (*Hist.* 4.39–45). A new avenger enters the fray, Curtius Montanus, who delivers a stinging attack on Regulus – the future villain of Pliny's letters – for his *delatio* under Nero. He stirs up such enthusiasm that Helvidius is emboldened to renew his attack on Eprius, but Eprius (in company, as in *Dial.* 8, with Vibius Crispus) sidesteps him with a smart retort and a pretence of walking out. At the Senate's next sitting, Domitian and Mucianus make their decisive intervention in defense of the delators (*Hist.* 4.44), with swift results: "once opposition was raised to their new-found independence, the senators abandoned it," and normality, namely perpetual fear of delators, is restored. The principal doubt over Tacitus' views of these transactions (as so often) is who arouses the greater indignation, the delators and their imperial protectors or the senators who surrender their freedom so easily. Curtius Montanus, however, is a striking exception. Unlike Helvidius, he receives no reply from his target Regulus, and unlike Helvidius, he is not tainted by any hint of vainglory; in this last stand against the delators, Curtius is the

unfinished *Histories*' ultimate advocate of revenge.

It is here that Pliny makes his most striking appearance in all Tacitus' works. Curtius' speech is remarkable for being the only speech in the *Histories* to be composed with Ciceronian clausulae, the rhythms which were a staple of Roman oratory but routinely avoided by historians. Martin (1967) was surely right to detect in this curious feature, together with details of vocabulary and the presence of Regulus, an evocation of Pliny, avowed Ciceronian and, in his *Epistles* as much as his *Panegyricus*, one of the most rhythmic of Latin writers. Here, then, we see a rare instance of Tacitus paying homage to Pliny beyond verbal allusion. Whether Tacitus is thinking of Pliny's dealings with Regulus, as Martin thought, or evoking the *ultio* for the younger Helvidius narrated in *Epistles* 9.13 (Syme 1991, 579), he seems to have given Pliny a cameo in the *Histories*' most forthright – and unrefuted – attack on delators.

The end of Curtius' speech is striking. With heavy irony he invites the Senate to let Regulus be: a fine precedent this will set! He concludes: "We have lost our vigor, honorable members; we are no longer that Senate which demanded the punishment of accusers and agents in the traditional manner after Nero was killed. The first day after a bad emperor is the best one" (*optimus est post malum principem dies primus*, *Hist.* 4.42.6). Martin (1967, 113–114) saw here the "resignation and regret" of Tacitus several years on from the *Agricola*, an acknowledgment that the high hopes of 97–98 had proved short-lived – if so, a distinctly un-Plinian recognition of shortcomings in the new regime. In fact the senators' enthusiastic response to Curtius' speech in the narrative (*Hist.* 4.43.1) demonstrates that his affected regret is ironical: this is not resignation but a provocative rebuke, challenging his fellow senators to prove him wrong. Yet the ultimate failure of the Senate to rise to this challenge, as they submit all too easily to Domitian and Mucianus, retrospectively reframes his irony as a seriously intended and accurate diagnosis of *libertas* lost, aligning Curtius with Tacitus in a condemnation of the Senate's spinelessness.

It is a bold leap to deduce Tacitus' views of the Senate of his own time from these debates, as from any of his historical works (Luce 1986). As *Histories* 4 charts the inauguration of the Flavian dynasty, it does not simply offer a parallel for the foundation of the Nerva–Trajanic regime: the reader is invited to reflect on differences as much as similarities. One thing is vital: to remember where the *Histories* are inexorably heading. Vespasian's establishment as emperor paves the way for the tyranny of Domitian, a future which hangs like a shadow over the surviving books (Schäfer 1977; Ash 1999, 138–141): the Senate's failure to suppress delators in this inaugural moment is the first step toward the devastation of 93. The memory of that year most

obviously scars the *Agricola* and Pliny's *Epistles*, but the Domitianic experience shapes Tacitus' attitude to delators and emperors alike throughout his writings (Walker 1960, 204–220). Did he join in the cries for revenge in the Nervan Senate? We will never know; he advertises no *ultio* on his part to match Pliny's, though he may not have had the opportunity, absent perhaps on provincial command (Birley 2000a, 235). Yet he authors an *ultio* of a different sort. Delators, as we have seen, are a prime target of his *Histories*, making his work a literary act of revenge to surpass any debate in the Senate, as the written word exposes their crimes to posterity. Here, perhaps, we see Tacitus mounting his greatest prosecution case of all (Rutledge 2001, 181; cf. Mellor 1993, 66). He hints as much when he places *ultio* as the final, telling word in his proem's spectacular closing *sententia*: never has it been clearer “that the gods are concerned not with our safety, but with our punishment” (*non esse curae deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem, Hist. 1.3.2*). The miseries of Flavian Rome were, rhetorically speaking, the manifestations of divine displeasure: *ultio* is revenge taken by the gods on Rome. Yet *nostra ultio* can mean not only “punishment inflicted on us” but also “punishment inflicted by us,” encapsulating then not only the *Histories*' content but also its purpose: to avenge the victims of Domitian's tyranny, martyrs and survivors alike.

Perhaps this is what provokes Pliny to connect Tacitus so insistently to his own, epistolary *ultio*; he is not simply arrogating the authority of a highly regarded fellow consular, or presciently binding himself to the historian whom later ages would revere as the greatest mind of his time. Each writer is engaged in a political and oratorical project; as Pliny presents in letters his own exemplary senatorial intervention in the new regime, he recognizes and responds to Tacitus' different but complementary intervention in the medium of historiography. What started in *Epistles* 1.6 as an anodyne joke about catching boar has turned out to be a game with much higher stakes, in which Pliny and Tacitus join, together, in wholly serious dialogue.

7. Into the Silence

Tacitus' and Pliny's literary products could scarcely look more different, giving little reason to suppose that they are traveling on the same journey. Closer inspection reveals more common ground. There are certainly different emphases – Pliny dwells more on the happiness of the present, Tacitus on the misery of the past; Pliny simplifies, Tacitus complicates – but these are not so much opposites as the two

sides of the same coin. Pliny, despite the remarkable subtleties of his collection that we have seen, presents a more immediate and accessible political worldview. Tacitus comes closest to this in the *Agricola*, his most personal work, but elsewhere his views of the principate and the present remain shrouded in complex layers of irony, more provoking than revealing. We have seen reason to suppose that Tacitus reciprocated Pliny's call to collaboration, through verbal allusion, through (perhaps) his treatment of family members, and most notably in the speech of Curtius Montanus, but we also saw in the case of Verginius Rufus his willingness to offend in the name of authorial *fides*. If collaboration is the subject of Tacitus' last letter, *Epistles* 9.14, and of his last named appearance in *Epistles* 9.23, independence and offense is the theme of one further letter which may offer a vestigial, final glimpse of the historian.

C. PLINIVS PATERNO SVO S.

quanta potestas, quanta dignitas, quanta maiestas, quantum denique numen sit historiae, cum frequenter alias tum proxime sensi. recitauerat quidam uerissimum librum, partemque eius in alium diem reseruauerat. ecce amici cuiusdam orantes obsecrantesque, ne reliqua recitaret. tantus audiendi quae fecerint pudor, quibus nullus faciendi quae audire erubescunt. et ille quidem praestitit quod rogabatur (sinebat fides); liber tamen ut factum ipsum manet manebit legeturque semper, tanto magis quia non statim. incitantur enim homines ad noscenda quae differuntur. uale.

Dear Paternus, The power, the dignity, the splendor – in a word, the divinity of history – although I have observed all this often before, it struck me especially just recently. Someone had recited a very truthful book and had saved part of it for another day. Along came someone's friends begging and beseeching him not to recite the rest. Such is people's shame at hearing what they have done, though they feel none at doing what they blush to hear. Well, he did as he was asked (his duty to the truth allowed it); but the book, like the deed itself, remains and will remain and will be read for ever, the more so because it is not read at once. For people are provoked to find out material which is delayed. Farewell. Pliny.

Epistles 9.27 describes the recitation of a *uerissimus liber* by a historian whose name Pliny ostentatiously withholds (*quidam*). Some of the audience, friends of another unnamed individual (*cuiusdam*), asked him not to continue, anxious at the forthcoming exposure of their friend's misdeeds. The reciter granted their request, but this only means his book will be read the more avidly when it circulates in

written form. This letter is Pliny's final paean to history and a recent history at that, and his praise is intimately connected with the theme of anonymity and offense. Doubtless there was more than one historian of Flavian Rome active in the 100s, but only one has been mentioned in the *Epistles* and Pliny's most favored correspondent at that. Can we help but identify the silenced reciter as Tacitus? The suggestion (made already by Fabia 1895, 8) gains support not just from the resonance of *manet manebit* with the *Agricola*'s last sentence (46.4 *manet mansurumque est*), but also from the letter's placement. The preceding *Epistles* 9.26 is a tract on oratory which recalls *Epistles* 1.20, the long letter to Tacitus (Paternus, addressee of both *Ep.* 1.21 and 9.27, cements the link); the following *Epistles* 9.28, which contains an exceptional echo of *Epistles* 1.1, is the last letter to Voconius Romanus, whose first letter was none other than *Epistles* 1.5 (making a chiasitic frame of *Epistles* 1.5–6 and 9.27–28). The striking triptych of *Epistles* 9.26–28 thus closes a series of loops opened up in Book 1, with the unnamed, silent historian at its center. Only here would Pliny depict Tacitus reciting: it is an elegant, Tacitean irony that this most intimate portrait of the *Histories*' production is wrapped in mystery. Pliny's final epigram on the power of uncertainty to stimulate interest – an advertisement for the next instalment of the *Histories*? – is a fitting tease with which to end this last, shadowy postscript to his dialogue with Tacitus.

“All men who want to rise above other animals should make every effort not to pass their lives in silence (*ne uitam silentio transeant*) like cattle,” but “nature shows different routes to different people (*aliud alii natura iter ostendit*)” (Sal., *Cat.* 1.1 and 3.1). As Sallust presents it, nature's choice is between making history and writing history. Tacitus took the latter route; Pliny a more complex mixture of the two, offering to posterity a virtual history of his own life in letters. Pliny may be more disarmingly (or unwinningly) honest about his ambitions – “nothing drives me more than a passionate desire for eternity,” *Ep.* 5.8.2 – but we need not doubt that Tacitus was equally ambitious, whether in occasional addresses to posterity like that in *Annals* 4.11.3 (“[I ask] those into whose hands my work falls ...”) or displaced in the defiant claim of Cremutius Cordus, annalistic historian *par excellence*, to posthumous remembrance (*Ann.* 4.35.2–3). Both authors offer, in different ways, an exemplary narrative for the present and for posterity – in Pliny's case an exemplary senatorial life lived under an exemplary *princeps*, in Tacitus' one exemplary life (*Agricola*) and a devastating exposé of counter-exemplary senators and emperors alike in *Histories* and *Annals*. Not quite the same path out of silence, perhaps, but at the least parallel tracks. How happy Pliny would have been to know that the “first Medicean,” the single manuscript on

which our knowledge of *Annals* 1–6 depends, transmitted Tacitus' text along with one of the best texts of *Epistles* 1–9 (Mynors 1963, xvi). Would Tacitus have been equally content? Perhaps so – quietly.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Syme's (1958, 112–120 and *passim*) view of a distant relationship between a disdainful Tacitus and a fawning Pliny is still widely held. Griffin (1999) is the signal revisionist discussion; see also Dominik (2007), Edwards (2008), and Woodman (2009b, 32–35). Sailor (2008), though not directly concerned with the relationship of Tacitus and Pliny, is important as a challenge to naïve acceptance of Tacitus' impassive authority. Marchesi (2008, 97–206) is an original and provocative treatment of many of the letters to Tacitus; see also Giua (2003), using them as evidence of Tacitus' contemporary reception, and Gibson and Morello (forthcoming, ch. 5).

For a general introduction to allusion see Hinds (1998), which, like most scholarship on the subject, is focused on verse writing; for Tacitean allusivity the best starting point is Woodman (2009a, 2009b); for Pliny, Marchesi (2008). The argument over *Epistles* 1.6 and 9.10 and the *Dialogus* has been running for over a century; see recently Murgia (1985, 173–181), Brink (1994, 256–264), Hoffer (1999, 175–176), Edwards (2008), Marchesi (2008, 118–135), Woodman (2009a, 32–33); see also Riggsby (1995) on *Epistles* 1.20. A common belief that *Epistles* 1.6 and 9.10 give contradictory advice about hunting was corrected by Cova (1966, 124–125) and Lefèvre (1978, 39), both widely neglected in Anglophone scholarship.

The fullest modern attempt to date Pliny's letters is Sherwin-White (1966, 20–65), whose theory of “book-dates” is still widely followed. Murgia (1985, 191–202) is a decisive argument for editorial revision of the nine-book collection as a whole, though he does not abandon altogether the equation of dramatic dates with dates of composition. For the position adopted here, that any letter could have been written or revised at a much later date, see Hoffer (1999, 9–10) and Gibson and Morello (forthcoming, ch. 1).

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Tacitus and Epic

Timothy A. Joseph

There was a fundamental kinship between ancient historiography and epic. Quintilian articulates this most succinctly when at *Institutio Oratoria* 10.1.31 he defines *historia* as “closest to poetry, and in a way a poem in free verse” (*proxima poetis, et quodam modo carmen solutum*). The basic similarities between the two genres are indeed many. As ancient critics and the texts themselves attest, epic and historiography typically treat the same material: kings and battles. Vergil’s definition of epic in this way at *Eclogues* 6.3 (*cum canerem reges et proelia*, “when I was singing of kings and battles,” a phrase revisited at *G.* 4.4–5, and then *in situ* at *Aen.* 7.41–42) is echoed not only by Horace (*Ars P.* 73 and *Carm.* 4.15.1–2) and Propertius (3.3.1–12) in their references to epic, but also by Tacitus, who lists “great wars” and “routed and captured kings” (*ingentia bella ... fusos captosque reges*, *Ann.* 4.32.1) among the ideal material for his writing. Shared material is joined by shared literary aims: both genres set out to entertain, and also to instruct (so Horace on epic at *Ars P.* 333–334 and 343–344, to be compared with Cicero on historiography at *Fin.* 5.51 and Tacitus on his writing at *Ann.* 4.32.2–33.3). The genres even to a great extent share the same starting point: Homer. The *pater historiae* Herodotus, for example, establishes himself as an heir to Homer more than anyone else when he declares that he is writing “so that the great and marvelous deeds displayed both by Greeks and by barbarians may not pass without κλέος (“glory”).” (μήτε ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωमाστά, τὰ μὲν Ἕλλησι τὰ δὲ βαρβάροισι ἀποδεχθέντα ἀκλεᾶ γένηται, *Hist.* 1 pref.). Indeed, historians in the employ of the Muse Clio (κλέος) were just as concerned with administering κλέος as their brethren composing in hexameter. Similarly, Thucydides – who himself feels required to report the main events and figures from the Trojan War in his Book 1 archaeology – counts among his predecessors in the historical enterprise the disdained poets (1.21.1)

(see Woodman 1988, 1–9).

In light of the closeness of the genres, then, it should not be surprising that we find similar language, scene-types, and narrative structures in historiography and epic. Modern readers of the two genres have singled out Tacitus as an author whose style and tone are especially akin to epic and one who alludes to epic poems with an uncommon frequency. Arguments have been made for Tacitean engagement with any number of epic poets, including Homer (Mayer 2003), Naevius (Ash 1997), Ennius (Morgan 1993; Ash 2007, 270), and Silius Italicus (Lauletta 1998, 267; and Manolaraki and Augoustakis in this volume).

Most often scholars – observing the many correspondences in language and form, as well as sympathetic links – have focused, as I will in this chapter, on Tacitus’ literary relationships with Vergil and Lucan. Indeed, Tacitus himself writes explicitly of the influence of these authors, in chapter 20 of the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*. There the modernist orator Aper states that “poetic beauty ... drawn forward from the shrine of Horace, Vergil, and Lucan” (*poeticus decor ... ex Horati et Vergili et Lucani sacrario prolatus*, *Dial.* 20.5) is expected of the contemporary orator. Now, the *Dialogus* is not just a reflection on the practice of oratory under the empire, but also in many ways a programmatic work about Tacitus’ imminent launch into historiography (Lauletta 1998, 173–204; Mayer 2001, 16–18). So Aper’s assertion of the importance of *poeticus decor*, coupled with the character of Maternus’ extensive adaptation of Vergilian language in his first speech (see Mayer 2001 on *Dial.* 12–13; Levene 2004, 165–166), seems to reveal much about the “poetics” that Tacitus will bring to his upcoming *Histories* and *Annals*.

Of the satirist and lyric poet Horace there is little in Tacitus’ works. Lucan’s influence is strong, especially, as we shall see, in the *Histories*. As Syme bluntly put it: “It is Virgil who dominates” (Syme 1958, 357, a judgment also at 143). The seminal study of Hans Schmaus (1887) posited nearly five hundred Vergilian correspondences in Tacitus. Robert Baxter pared this number down to three hundred correspondences “of a fairly certain nature” (1971, 93). Luise Robbert (1917) did similar, and similarly helpful, compiling for Tacitus and Lucan. A quantitative inquiry will not be the approach of this chapter. Rather, I will revisit, or visit for the first time, a few representative passages that demonstrate Tacitus’ manner of allusion to Vergil and Lucan. Throughout the chapter I will suggest answers to the question of why or for what literary purpose Tacitus is engaging with these poets. For, as we shall see, the *poeticus decor* that Tacitus brings into his writing is seldom mere decoration. More often it delivers meaning, be it for a contained passage alone or for his work as a whole.

1. *Poeticus Decor*

Hallmarks of Tacitus' prose style are *breuitas* and *uariatio* (Martin 1981, 215–225), and his fondness for these qualities is reflected in how he alludes to Vergil and Lucan. The phrases that he draws from them are often concise and fraught with connotation. Also, Tacitus will frequently vary or “tweak” phrases in his adaptation of them to his own narrative contexts (a practice noted by Syme 1958, 357–358, and Baxter 1971, 98). A telling example of these practices is in the necrology of Julia, the daughter of Augustus and scorned, exiled wife of Tiberius:

imperium adeptus extorrem, infamem et post interfectum
Postumum Agrippam omnis spei egenam inopia ac **tabe longa**
peremit.

(*Ann.* 1.53.2)

Once [Tiberius] got hold of power, he destroyed through starving and prolonged atrophy the exile [Julia], who was already without honor, and, after the death of Agrippa Postumus, lacking all hope.

The collocation *tabe longa peremit* is drawn from Vergil's description of the Mourning Fields, where scorned lovers reside in his Underworld (so Syme 1958, 358, as well as the usually skeptical Goodyear 1972, 325). At *Aeneid* 6.442 the poet writes of this region: *hic quos durus amor crudeli tabe peredit* (“Here were those whom hard love consumed with cruel atrophy”). Through the adaptation of Vergil's phrase, the exiled Julia suffers the same, hellish decay as those in the Mourning Fields. The visceral *tabes* makes the suffering physical and immediate, and the decay is extended in Tacitus' telling through the replacement of *crudeli* with *longa*. At the same time, with the alteration of one letter Tacitus turns Vergil's gradual consumption (*peredit*) into speedier destruction (*peremit*). The paradoxical but potent image that we get is of immediate, but simultaneously elongated, annihilation. And, while Julia's death is turned into the stuff of Vergil's Hell, the failure of her and Tiberius' marriage is raised to the level of the failed Roman marriage *par excellence*, that of Aeneas and Dido, who awaits around the corner in the Mourning Fields (*Aen.* 6.450–476).

Later in the narrative of *Annals* Book 1, Tacitus employs a loaded Lucanian phrase with similar profit for his narrative. In 1.65 he describes the mood of the Romans under Caecina and the Germans under Arminius on the night before a meeting of the two armies. A dream comes to Caecina that night (*ducemque terruit dira quies*, “A terrible dream frightened the general,” 1.65.2), of the bloodied and

pleading Quintilius Varus, whose legions had been catastrophically lost to Arminius years earlier. A first thing to note here is Tacitus' employment of a dream sequence, one of the inventive scene-types welcome in epic (e.g., the dream of Hector at *Aen.* 2.268–297 and *passim*) and in historiography (e.g., Germanicus' dream at *Ann.* 2.14.1, Hannibal's at Livy 21.22, with Allen 1961, 557–559, and Pelling 1997). There is also a specific referent with the words *dira quies*. At *Civil War* 7.26–27, just after describing the pleasant dreams that greeted Pompey on the night before the battle of Pharsalus, Lucan anticipates the dreams of the following night, after defeat: *crastina dira quies et imagine maesta diurna / undique funestas acies feret, undique bellum* ("Tomorrow's terrible dream, saddened by the image of today, will bring dead battle lines everywhere, and war everywhere"). The phrase that Lucan and then Tacitus after him employ is especially evocative – and frightening – because in it the word *quies*, whose primary meaning is "the repose of sleep" (*OLD* 1) or "rest" (*OLD* 2), comes to mean just the opposite: a terrible (*dira*) nightmare (see Goodyear 1981, 113–114, on Tacitus' adoption of this commonly poetic usage of *quies*). But in the adaptation of the phrase, there is a change of perspective. The dream that Lucan forecasts for Pompey at 7.26–27 will come after the battle at hand, while Tacitus makes Caecina's *dira quies* come before the battle with Arminius. A sharp note of foreboding thus comes with the phrase. After some struggles, Caecina in time fights off the German opposition (1.68), and the slaughter of the Roman legions is not repeated. Yet by including Lucan's phrase here, Tacitus for a moment confounds the expectations of the reader, who braces for an outcome like the one that befell, and haunted, Pompey. (See also Pelling 1997, 207, and O'Gorman 2000, 54, on the Lucanian allusion here.)

A more extended engagement with an epic model may come in Tacitus' depiction of Germanicus and Arminius in *Annals* 1 and 2. Several scholars (notably Edelmaier 1937, 134–139; Baxter 1972; Foucher 2000, 99–105) have argued that Tacitus singles out and thus elevates these characters in his narrative by underscoring similarities with Vergil's Aeneas and Turnus, respectively. The arguments in this example are grounded less in meaningful verbal links (which to my mind are for the most part tenuous) than in thematic and structural connections. So, as Baxter (1972, 248–254) maintains, Tacitus takes every chance to highlight the Aeneas-like duty of Germanicus toward his country (e.g., at *Ann.* 1.42.1), the gods (1.39.1 and 1.61.1), and his "father" Tiberius (1.42). Baxter (1972, 264–269) goes on to make the intriguing suggestion that Tacitus presents Germanicus' journey eastward (*Ann.* 2.53–61) as a sad inversion of Aeneas' trip from the east to Rome. Their odysseys include many of the same stops, but

Aeneas' is a hopeful journey of foundation toward the future, while Germanicus' is filled with static inquiries into the past and concludes with his premature death in Syria. The elevation of Germanicus to a heroic level has also been read as a means of highlighting by contrast the poor leadership of Tiberius, whose characterization is also enriched by epic allusion (Foucher 2000, 102–105). So, amid the presentation of Germanicus' leadership as dutiful and perhaps Aeneas-like, at *Annals* 1.47.1 Tacitus describes Tiberius' unpopular decision to stay in Rome and not visit the mutinous legions as *immutum aduersus eos sermones fixumque* ("immovable in the face of this [criticism] and fixed [in his mind]"). But his actual indecisiveness on the matter is brought out by an allusion to *Aeneid* 4.15, where Dido describes her determination not to commit to another man – a determination that will shortly crumble – as *fixum immutumque*. In the allusion, then, Tiberius' certainty as a decision-maker is given all the strength and trustworthiness of the soon-to-bend Dido (so Miller 1961–1962, 32; Bews 1972–1973, 40).

The above examples will serve as representatives of how Tacitus, in a given passage, can adapt a Vergilian or Lucanian phrase or theme for his own purposes of characterization and narrative development. A final example that I will examine in this section also demonstrates Tacitus' allusive hand, but is revealing not about his characters but about his own self-fashioning. It comes in the digression at *Annals* 4.32–33, where Tacitus steps aside from the tedious treason trials that are making up much of his Tiberian narrative and discusses his writing. I quote from the opening of the passage:

Pleraque eorum quae rettuli quaeque referam parua forsitan et leuia memoratu uideri non nescius sum; sed nemo annales nostros cum scriptura eorum contenderit qui ueteres populi Romani res composuere. ingentia illi bella, expugnationes urbium, fusos captosque reges, aut si quando ad interna praeuerterent, discordias consulum aduersum tribunos, agrarias frumentariasque leges, plebis et optimatum certamina libero egressu memorabant. **nobis in arto et inglorius labor**: immota quippe aut modice lacescita pax, maestae urbis res et princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus erat.

(*Ann.* 4.32.1–2)

That many of the things that I have related and shall relate seem perhaps slight and trivial to recall I am not unaware. But no one should compare my annals with the writing of those who compiled the old affairs of the Roman people. With free rein those men recalled great wars, the sieges of cities, routed and captured kings, or, whenever they turned their attention to

internal matters, the discord between consuls and tribunes, agrarian and grain laws, and the struggles between the plebs and the optimates. But my work is meager and inglorious: indeed peace was unmoved, or only modestly disturbed; the affairs in the city were miserable; and the *princeps* was uninterested in expanding the empire.

Tacitus seems to express an anxiety that his writing about trivial matters (*parua forsitan et leuia memoratu*) cannot compete with that of his predecessors, who treated great wars, sieges, kings, and other promising, conflict-filled material. He repeats the longing for such rich subject matter for his readers at 4.33.3: *nam situs gentium, uarietates proeliorum, clari ducum exitus retinent ac redintegrant legentium animum* (“For the habitats of peoples, the ups and downs of battles, the distinguished deaths of leaders – those things retain and refresh the minds of readers”). As we observed above, this ideal historiographical material is also the definitive stuff of epic, as for example, Vergil (*Ecl.* 6.3, *G.* 4.4–5, *Aen.* 7.41–42), Horace (*Ars P.* 73 and *Carm.* 4.15.1–2), and Propertius (3.3.1–12) attest. So when Tacitus articulates his anxiety of influence at 4.32.1, he is, I suggest, placing himself in the tradition of epic as well as historiographical forerunners.

Furthermore, Tacitus’ assertion of inadequacy in this tradition becomes, upon closer look, just the opposite (Goodyear 1972, 31 n. 2, writes of 4.32.1: “a pinch of salt is probably required”; see similarly Clarke 2002, 100–101). The above passage continues, at 4.32.2: *non tamen sine usu fuerit introspicere illa primo aspectu leuia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur* (“However, it will not have been without benefit to look into those affairs which seem trivial at first glance, but from which the movements of great affairs often arise”). Tacitus is aware that the examination of what is seemingly trivial (*leuia*, the same word used of his material just above, at 4.32.1) can lead to the understanding of *magnae res*. Moreover, as A. J. Woodman has studied (1988, 186–190; see also Keitel 1984), in the surrounding narrative Tacitus dresses up his domestic events as battles and sieges and adapts to his own narrative many of the other set-pieces employed by his predecessors. By transforming his bland material into the ideal, pleasurable stuff, Tacitus in many ways outstrips those who came before him in this enterprise.

At the center of Tacitus’ ironic complaint is a revealing allusion to the opening of *Georgics* 4. In that passage Vergil is introducing the mini-epic about bees that will make up much of the book:

admiranda tibi leuium spectacula rerum

magnanimosque duces totiusque ordine gentis

mores et studia et populos et proelia dicam.

in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria, si quem

numina laeua sinunt auditque uocatus Apollo.

(G. 4.3–7)

I shall sing to you of the marvelous sights of a little world, and its stouthearted leaders, and, in order, the whole race's character, pursuits, nations, and battles. The work is slender, but not the glory – if the unfavorable gods allow it, and if Apollo hears the call.

In launching this little epic – which will be replete with leaders and battles as well as ethnographic features – Vergil writes of the small scale (*leuium spectacula rerum; in tenui labor*) but hardly small glory (*at tenuis non gloria*) of the bees' work. He is also writing programmatically of his own refined (*in tenui*), Callimachean approach, which, although it too is on a smaller scale and treats *res leues*, will nevertheless earn him *gloria* (Thomas 1988 Vol. 1, 1–3 and Vol. 2, 148–149).

Vergil's statement of his literary aims is very similar to what Tacitus lays out at *Annals* 4.32.1–2. And the allusion to *Georgics* 4.6 at *Annals* 4.32.2 (*nobis in arto et inglorius labor*, “My work is meager and inglorious”) operates much like Tacitus' passage as a whole: it too is a feint (see similarly Syme 1958, 339 n. 2). He ostensibly defers to his predecessor when branding his work *inglorius*, to be contrasted with the hardly slender *gloria* (*tenuis non gloria*) of Vergil. However, in the adaptation of Vergil's line, Tacitus asserts his own worthiness as a successor to the poet. The words *in arto* serve on one level to contrast (facetiously, as we have seen) the narrow path on which his limited material keeps him with the free rein (*libero egressu*) allowed his predecessors by their richer material. But in the allusion and adaptation of Vergil's *in tenui*, the phrase *in arto* also announces Tacitus' similarly refined, precise, exacting style. He even surpasses his model's refinement here, when, in a show of greater *breuitas*, he compresses Vergil's *in tenui labor; at tenuis non gloria* into the more taut and economical *nobis in arto et inglorius labor*. On top of this, the allusion activates for the reader the context of Vergil's words in which the poet asserts that there *can* be *gloria* in the treatment of apparently trivial material (*leuium spectacula rerum*). This is Tacitus' point as well. With the adaptation of the poet's phrase, in a programmatic passage that in many ways mirrors Vergil's, the historian positions himself as one following in the tradition of that famous singer of kings and battles.

2. *Eaedem Scelerum Causae*

My attention will now turn to the *Histories* and to Tacitus' presentation in that work of the civil wars of the year 69 CE. Into these wars he brings much of the language and imagery from Vergil's Trojan and Latin wars and Lucan's *Civil War*. For example, several scholars have discussed how Tacitus presents the death of the emperor Galba in *Histories* 1 as a repetition of Priam's death in *Aeneid* 2 (Benario 1972; Miller 1987, 99–100; Ash 1999, 79–83; Pagán 2006, 208–209). Another Roman struggle begins with the poignant, pitiful end of an old monarch. Similarly, the close concentration of allusions to Lucan's *Civil War* and especially to the *Aeneid* in Tacitus' account of the second Battle of Cremona (3.26–34) invites us to read that battle and the subsequent sack of the city as repetitive of events from those poets' wars (Joseph 2010; and see Baxter 1971 and Keitel 2010, 349–350 on Vergil's influence here). The sense of repetition is strongly felt when, for example, Tacitus describes the siege of the Vitellian camp outside Cremona with diction that repeats, responds to, and outdoes the language used by Vergil of the attack on the Trojan camp at *Aeneid* 9.507–518, and by Lucan of the siege of Massilia at *Civil War* 3.474–484. Ellen O'Gorman (1995, 117–124) has looked at how Tacitus announces this engagement with epic in the table of contents of the *Histories*, at 1.2.1, where he places his *opus* in the tradition of the great war *opera* of Vergil and Lucan.

Corroborating the sense that epic's wars are being repeated in the *Histories* is the recurrence in this work of two causative forces that predominate in Vergil's and Lucan's narratives: divine anger and human madness. These two forces Tacitus in fact holds up, together, in the programmatic digression at *Histories* 2.37–38. In that passage the historian steps aside from his account of the war between Otho and Vitellius into what is “the one major personal entry in the *Histories*” (Williams 1978, 239). He begins the digression by forcefully rejecting the report found in other authors that the opposing sides met and discussed a truce (2.37). He goes on to write of the constancy of power-lust as a driving force behind the civil wars in Rome's history (2.38.1). His lament of the relentlessness of Rome's civil warriors and the repetitiveness of her civil wars reaches its peak when he asserts:

non discessere ab armis in Pharsalia ac Philippis ciuium legiones,
nedum Othonis ac Vitellii exercitus sponte positura bellum
fuerint: **eadem** illos **deum** ira, **eadem** hominum rabies,
eaedem scelerum causae in discordiam egere.

(*Hist.* 2.38.2)

The legions of citizens did not let up from battle at Pharsalia and

Philippi, nor were the armies of Otho and Vitellius about to put off war voluntarily: the same anger of the gods, the same madness of humans, the same causes of crime drove them into discord.

Sameness/repetition is an abiding condition of Roman civil war, as the rapid-fire tricolon *eadem ... eadem ... eadem* makes clear. In this statement we may also see the declaration of a corresponding literary sameness. Elisabeth Henry (1991, 2995) has compared Tacitus' blaming of divine anger for the wars in the *Histories* with the approach of Vergil, who at the outset of the *Aeneid* outlines the causative role of Juno's anger in the tale that is to come (*Aen.* 1.4, 1.8–11). "*Ira* is the mainspring of the action, in both epic and history," Henry observes (1991, 2995). She compares Vergil's opening appeals to divine anger with the ominous statement that concludes the *Histories'* table of contents. There, after listing the myriad disasters (*Hist.* 1.2.1–2) and marvels (*Hist.* 1.3.2) that await his reader, Tacitus writes:

nec enim umquam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus magisque iustis indiciis adprobatum est non esse curae deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem.

(*Hist.* 1.3.2)

Never by darker disasters of the Roman people or by clearer signs was it proven that our safety was not a concern for the gods, but our vengeance.

This early and unforgettable line invites us to read the disasters that follow in Tacitus' narrative as acts of divine punishment, the results of the gods' displeasure with Rome. As readers of this passage have suggested (e.g., Chilver 1979, 45; Fantham 1992, 8 n. 24), such a conception of civil war as divine punishment may be indebted most of all to Lucan. In the *Civil War*, unlike in the *Aeneid*, there is no Jovian providence, but only divine anger, vengeance, and opposition to Rome (see, for example, *BC* 1.81–82, 1.126–128, and 4.807–809, with Fantham 2003). This is the same dark impression that we get from *Histories* 1.3.2 and 2.38.2. And in each of these passages we encounter the high-pitched, frustrated emotionality that is a hallmark of Lucan's style.

Next to divine anger in Tacitus' programmatic statement about the sameness of civil war is the "same madness of humans" (2.38.2: *eadem hominum rabies*). The theme of the madness of civil war, typically captured by the words *furor* and *rabies*, is common in Latin literature (Jal 1963, 421–425), but it is epic poets who elevate madness to an explanatory force in their narratives (Hershkowitz 1998). At *Aeneid* 1.291–296 Vergil has Jupiter identify *Furor impius* as the force that will be restrained when Rome at last puts aside her civil wars. The

civil war of *Aeneid* Books 7–12 is sparked by the madness with which the Fury Allecto (at 7.341–571) enflames the two sides; in time Aeneas himself is overtaken by it (see Books 10 and 12 *passim*, peaking at 12.946). This madness then runs rampant in Lucan’s *Civil War*. Its primacy in his narrative the poet holds up at 1.8 (*quis furor, o ciues?* “What was this madness, citizens?”), before showing us its manifestations and consequences throughout the poem (Hershkowitz 1998, 198–209). In Tacitus’ *Histories* forms of *rabies* appear four times, *furor* and its relative *furo* eleven times. Each time these words describe the actions of his civil warriors or of the many mutineers and rebels whose constant uprisings contribute to the chaotic, multi-front civil war of this work. The pronounced inclusion of madness in the *Histories*, the strict association of it with acts of *discordia*, and the blaming of this force for horrific and otherwise unexplainable events certainly recall the similar enlistments of madness by Vergil and Lucan for their civil wars (so too Sailor 2008, 208; and see Woodman 2006 on the metaphor of madness in the account of the Pannonian and German armies’ mutinies at *Ann.* 1.16–49).

The prevalence of this force in the concluding, climactic chapters of *Histories* 3 illustrates well how Tacitus employs it. At *Histories* 3.72.1, Tacitus decries the burning of the Capitol by Romans in December 69. Alongside mention of divine disapproval of Roman ways (*propitiis, si per mores nostros liceret, deis*, “with favorable gods, if only our character had allowed,” *Hist.* 3.72.1), Tacitus blames the madness of Rome’s leaders (*furore principum*) for this disgraceful, unprecedented act. As Sailor (2008, 209–210) has discussed, the openness of the phrase *furore principum* may attribute self-destructive madness not strictly to the civic leaders or even the warring emperors of December 69, but to the very institution of the principate. Just above in this passage, the Vitellian soldiers who mount the Capitol are described similarly (*furens miles*, 3.71.1): civil warriors of every rank are overtaken by madness, and all of them are responsible for the disgraces of 69 (this is a theme we see highlighted in 2.37–38 as well). This force continues to prevail even after the Capitol burns. At *Histories* 3.80.2 Tacitus appears to recall a specific phrase and moment of madness from Lucan’s civil war. There he describes the near-murder of senatorial ambassadors by the Flavian troops lingering outside the walls of Rome:

et ni dato a duce praesidio defensi forent, sacrum etiam in <ter>
 exterarum gentes legatorum ius ante ipsa patriae moenia **ciuilis**
rabies usque ad exitium temerasset.

(*Hist.* 3.80.2)

And if they had not been protected by a guard provided by the

general, civil madness would have desecrated – all the way to the point of murder – that sacred law of ambassadors (that is honored even in foreign lands) before the very walls of their country.

Tacitus makes *ciuilis rabies* itself the subject here; the will of the Flavian troops is subordinated to this “civil madness” or the “madness of civil war,” which, without the guard present, would have murdered a group of peacemaking senators. The joining of *ciuilis* and *rabies* operates much like the juxtaposition of *hominum* and *rabies* at *Histories* 2.38.2: *rabies* is a condition appropriate for beasts (*OLD* 1), not humans, and certainly not Roman citizens. The wholly “uncivic” behavior of these civil war combatants comes alive in this phrase.

Lucan is the only other author to make the striking pairing of *ciuilis* and *rabies*. At *BC* 6.60–63, with the camps of Pompey and Caesar abutting in the territory around Dyrrachium, the poet remarks on the opposing armies’ proximity, a gauge of how imminent the decisive conflict is:

coit area belli:

hic alitur sanguis terras fluxurus in omnes,

hic et Thessalicae clades Libycaeque tenentur;

aestuat angusta **rabies ciuilis** harena.

(*BC* 6.60–63)

The field of war is contracting. Here blood destined to flow to all lands is fed. Here the disasters in Thessaly and Libya are contained; in this narrow space the civil madness simmers.

Lucan too makes *rabies ciuilis* an independent agent. For a time it simmers at Dyrrachium, confined within a narrow space (*angusta ... harena* – Lucan’s chiasmus well demonstrates the momentary “trapping” of this animal force), but it will of course burst out unchecked at Pharsalus (note, for example, the emphatic *hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar*, “Here was madness, here beastliness, here your crimes, Caesar,” of the frontlines of the battle at 7.551). As we have seen, Tacitus presents the activity of *ciuilis rabies* at *Histories* 3.80.2 very similarly. Although its sub-human, desecrating ways are for a time restrained by the presence of the ambassadors’ *praesidium*, in the ensuing chapters 3.81–84 further attempts to thwart the Flavian soldiers’ advance and to negotiate peace fail when all are struck by this madness. It is fitting that at *Histories* 3.83.2 Tacitus uses *furo* to describe the fighting at Rome after the entrance of these Flavian troops.

At *Histories* 1.63.1 we may encounter another case of direct engagement with Lucan's language of madness. There Tacitus is describing the Vitellian general Valens' march through the town of Divodurum, as he attempts to win over towns in Gaul to the Vitellian cause. Though unprovoked by the townspeople, Valens' soldiers unleash an attack on them, which Tacitus describes in a long appendage to his main clause:

... raptis repente armis ad caedem innoxiae ciuitatis, non ob praedam aut spoliandi cupidine, sed **furore et rabie et causis incertis eoque difficilioribus remediis**, donec precibus ducis **mitigati** ab excidio ciuitatis **temperauere**; caesa tamen ad quattuor milia hominum.

(*Hist.* 1.63.1)

... and they suddenly snatched up arms for the slaughter of the innocent people, not for booty or out of the lust for looting, but out of a beastlike fury, and for uncertain reasons that made remedies even more difficult – until, soothed by the entreaties of their general, they refrained from the destruction of the city. Nevertheless, some four thousand human beings were slaughtered.

The expected explanation for their plunder, the lust for booty, Tacitus explicitly rejects. Their conduct is difficult to explain (*causis incertis*); the only rationale he ventures to offer is that they did it out of “beastlike fury” (*furore et rabie*).

I have translated this pair as a hendiadys, with *furor* and *rabies* working together to convey a type of compounded, redoubling “super” madness. Commentators on this passage have noted that Lucan also paired these two words (Heubner 1963, *ad loc.*; Damon 2003, *ad loc.*). He was in fact the first author to join *furor* and *rabies* in the description of war and to let loose this “super” madness onto his battlefield. He introduces the pair at *Civil War* 4.237–245, in a simile that equates the Pompeian troops, resuming warfare after a momentary truce, with domesticated animals returning to the taste of blood. Lucan writes of the beasts: *si torrida paruus / uenit in ora cruor, redeunt rabiesque furorque* (“If just a little blood enters their thirsty mouths, the beastlike fury returns,” 4.239–240). This “beastlike fury” is transferred to the soldiers, who rush back to battle at the goad of their general Petreius (4.243–245). Later in the poem Lucan uses these words in conjunction to describe the slaughter of family members at Pharsalus, the most intimate and thus the most horrific fighting that day: *hic furor, hic rabies, hic sunt tua crimina, Caesar* (“Here was madness, here beastliness, here your crimes, Caesar,” *BC* 7.551). Of such sights the poet refuses to write any more than these words (*BC*

7.552–554). And in the account of Caesar’s tryst with Cleopatra in Book 10, a respite, says the poet, from the political and military developments at Alexandria, Lucan mentions the persistence of Caesar’s sexual appetite “even in the midst of his beastlike fury” (*et in media rabie medioque furore*, 10.72). Here the collocation comes to define the entire Caesarean war effort.

Lucan’s coupling of these two words – and the powerful comment on civil war that they work together to offer – was attractive to Florus, who wrote his *Epitome* in the first half of the second century and frequently used Lucanian language (Goodyear 1982, 664; Leigh 2007, 492). He juxtaposes *furor* and *rabies* three times, at *Epitome* 1.11.21, 1.34.53, and 1.34.79. Apart from Lucan and his imitator Florus, Tacitus is the only author who couples the two near-synonyms in the depiction of warfare. His adaptation of Lucan’s hendiadys in *Histories* 1.63 is to great effect. When he uses the phrase *furore et rabie* to explain the Vitellian troops’ slaughter, the “super” madness that Lucan depicted so vividly lives on, repeated and still causing horrors in Tacitus’ civil wars. Moreover, Tacitus prolongs the metaphor, both in an addendum to the phrase – when he states that remedies for this disease will be hard to find (*difficilioribus remediis*) – and later in the passage. The maddened troops are eventually soothed (*mitigati*) and calm down (*temperauere*), but the slaughter of four thousand innocents nevertheless ensues. Townspeople in the rest of Gaul fearfully prepare for these mad men with various “means for soothing their hostile anger” (*placamenta hostilis irae*, 1.63.2).

With this considerable expansion of Lucan’s phrase and theme comes a greater sense of how incurable and thus prolonged this “beastlike fury” will be. So, while the human madness propelling the action of Tacitus’ narrative may be the same as Lucan’s madness, here there is also the suggestion that things in the *Histories* have gotten more out of control, more ongoing, worse.

3. *Vrbem Romam a Principio Reges Habuere*

The repetition of episodes and entities from Vergil’s and Lucan’s wars that we see in the *Histories* is emblematic of a quality that Tacitus shares with, if not inherits from, Roman epic: a focus on continuities, even a temporal openness, a sense that the writing is about Rome – her enduring strengths, and recurring problems – at all times. Vergil manipulates time through continual use of prophecy and ecphrasis,

making his poem about the Rome of Aeneas, the Rome of his time, the Rome of all times. In a similar way Lucan, from the narrative position of Pharsalus, looks back to civil wars past (e.g., during the recollection at 2.67–233) and ahead to the ongoing war against *libertas* under the principate, and ultimately he leaves the reader with a sense of the endlessness of civil war (on which see Masters 1992, 216–259). This continuity or endlessness of civil war Tacitus picks up in the *Historiae*, with struggles that repeat not just those from epic, but one another (see Damon 2006 on intratextual repetition in the *Hist.*). He even perpetuates the civil wars past the formal terminus of Vespasian's victory by imbuing the events of *Historiae* 4–5 with the language of civil discord (O'Gorman 1995, 124–129; Ash 2006, 73–75). The *Annals* too have a certain temporal openness. Victoria Pagán (2002) has discussed how Tacitus' use of digressions at *Annals* 1.61 and 2.53 to address the reign of Augustus is comparable to Vergil's employment of ecphrasis at *Aeneid* 8.626–728, where the events in Roman history on Aeneas' shield are described. The two authors “manage to transcend the temporal frameworks of the *Aeneid* and the *Annals* and to incorporate Augustan victory and defeat into their narratives” (Pagán 2002, 46). Other Tacitean digressions work similarly to broaden the scope or open up the temporal parameters of his work (e.g., *Ann.* 3.55, which looks ahead from his narrative point to the decline of *luxus mensae* at Rome, and the very next chapter, which looks back to Augustus' seizure of the *tribunicia potestas*, at 3.56.2–3).

If interest in Roman continuities and temporal openness are things that Tacitus shares with epic, then perhaps with that understanding we can better make sense of the dactylic hexameter that opens the *Annals*. As commentators note, Sallust too begins the programmatic digression at *Bellum Iugurthinum* 5.1 with a hexameter (*bellum scripturus sum quod populus Romanus*, “I am about to write about the war that the Roman people ...”), and Livy opens his preface with two thirds of a hexameter (*facturusne operae pretium sim*, “Whether I am likely to accomplish anything worth the effort ...”). In all three instances the historians appear to convey an awareness of the fundamental kinship between their undertakings and epic (on this practice see Schubert 2006, who traces such hexameters in historical prose back specifically to Ennius). Tacitus' incipit at *Annals* 1.1.1, apart from its hexametrical intonation, has a distinct, startling openness to it: *urbem Romam a principio reges habuere* (“From the beginning kings have held the city of Rome”). A. D. Leeman (1973, 192) remarks: “A *principio*, not *principio* ... launches the sweeping chronological movement ... Tacitus seems to suggest that the story of *dominatio* in Rome starts already with the earliest beginnings of Roman history.” Indeed, Tacitus' use of the phrase *a principio* is much

odder than it appears. We do not find it elsewhere in his writing; the common Tacitean term for “in/at the beginning” is *principio*, as in the stock phrase *principio anni*, “at the beginning of the year,” which we see (sometimes in reverse order) at *Histories* 5.1.1, *Annals* 3.31.2, 4.4.1, 6.2.1, 13.34.2, and 16.22.1. With the very different phrase “from the beginning” at *Annals* 1.1.1, Tacitus opens up the scope of his beginning statement. The matter of Rome’s ongoing, endless subjection to *dominatio*, as Leeman writes, is given pride of place (see similarly Lauletta 1998, 98–99 and Clarke 2002, 84–86). Also introduced with this opening is Tacitus’ plan to look for continuities in the Roman condition, and the hexameter underlines the point: Tacitus’ work will have the breadth of scope, even the timelessness, of epic.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

On the fundamental similarities between historiography and epic, see the seminal treatments of Wiseman (1979, esp. 143–153) and Woodman (1988, esp. 1–9, 28–31, 98–101), as well as Leigh (2007) on the “overlap” between the two genres. The concise words of Kraus (2005, 242–243) are also helpful. In French there is the comprehensive work of Foucher (2000).

On Tacitus and epic see the occasional insightful judgments of Syme (1958, 110–111, 143, 339 n. 2, 356–358, 362–363). Lauletta (1998), in Italian, and Foucher (2000), in French, have much to say on points big and small. The first major inquiry into Tacitus’ relationship with Vergil was Schmaus (1887), who catalogues, with little interpretation, Vergilian correspondences in all of Tacitus’ works. Baxter (1971) on *Histories* 3 and (1972) on *Annals* 1 and 2 argues for a debt to Vergil in diction and structure. Miller (1961–1962) and (1987) looks at a series of examples of allusion to Vergil, while also drawing broader conclusions about their sympathetic connections; similar is the work of Henry (1991). See also the discussion by Woodman (2009, 1–7).

Robbert (1917) collects correspondences between Tacitus and Lucan, with guarded interpretive judgments. More recently, O’Gorman (1995) has looked at Tacitus’ use of Lucan for his presentation of civil war, and Tzounakas (2005) has examined verbal and structural parallels with Lucan in the *Agricola*.

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Silius Italicus and Tacitus on the Tragic Hero

The Case of Germanicus

Eleni Manolaraki and Antony Augoustakis

Tacitus' contradictory portrait of Germanicus is one of the most elusive aspects of the *Annals* and continues to generate debate. Most recently, Williams has proposed an interpretation that goes beyond the issue of whether or not Germanicus is a "moral" (i.e., sympathetic) character. Instead, Williams illustrates how Germanicus' ambivalent portrait in Tacitus functions "as commentary on the principate and its arbitrary nature" (Williams 2009, 126). An overlapping critical approach explores the influence of the epic-heroic tradition on Tacitus' Germanicus. For example, in his discussion of Germanicus' *aemulatio Alexandri* Gissel proposes that through the intended parallelism the Roman historian comments on Trajan's plans for eastern expansion (Gissel 2001; *contra* cf. Kelly 2010, who reads Germanicus' visit in Egypt as a complicated mediation on the rise and fall of tyranny and as a discussion of cycles of power, domination, and liberty at Rome). Building on discussions that highlight the ambiguity of Germanicus while exploring Tacitus' literary models, we propose an epic *comparandum* that has not been included heretofore in the discussion: Silius Italicus' Hannibal.

Given the general influence of the heroic tradition on the Tacitean Germanicus it might appear redundant to establish a connection with Silius. The two authors, one might argue, are merely drawing from the common topos of a strong leader. In an article on the relationship between Tacitean historiography and Roman epic poetry of the early imperial period, Burck (1971) emphasizes the role of heroic, epic diction in the portrayal of Tacitean historical characters: specifically,

Burck focuses on what he calls the *atmosphere*, not the specific allusions or echoes that are hard to attribute to individual works and poets. In this sense of a broad, thematic interdependence, Burck is rather interested in the portrayal of men in power, in the role freedom plays in epic and historiography or the role of *fortuna* ("chance") in the lives of mortals. Yet there are grounds for pursuing further a particularly interesting intertextual relationship between Tacitus and Silius. First, Hannibal's shadow in Tacitus has import for Germanicus that goes beyond epic modeling. Specifically, Hannibal's specter accentuates the tragic aspects of Germanicus' character and fate: his oblivion to the political establishment controlling him, his alienation from family and country, his wasted military potential, and, eventually, his death. Moreover, the allusive incarnation of Alexander in Silius' Hannibal (discussed by Gibson 2005) constitutes a relatively recent precedent for Tacitus whose earliest works coincide with the composition of the last books of the *Punica* in the second part of the last decade of the first century CE. Silius' Hannibal is therefore a potential model for Tacitus' Germanicus, at least as much as earlier Alexander-narratives such as Diodorus, Curtius, and others summarized by Gissel. Finally, our acknowledgment of Silius, a Flavian epicist, in the canon of Tacitus' epic models alongside the time-honored paradigms of Virgil and Lucan provides us with greater interpretive mobility in future readings of Tacitus' historical works. To illuminate the presence of Hannibal in the Tacitean narrative we focus on two episodes of Germanicus' career: his shipwreck in the North Sea (*Ann.* 2.23–24) and his sightseeing of Egyptian antiquities (*Ann.* 2.60–61).

The storm that obliterates Germanicus' fleet off the coast of Germany is an episode with a rich literary pedigree. In his monumental commentary Goodyear wisely advises against reading an exclusive influence of the storm in *Aeneid* 1 and adduces equally pertinent models from Pacuvius, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, and Albinovanus Pedo, the latter with justifiable reservations (Goodyear 1981, 243; an exhaustive discussion of the relevant bibliography is offered by Lauletta 1998, 207–261). Tacitus' narrative certainly draws from the epic storm topos but, we believe, it departs from it in two significant aspects: the first of these is his attention to the role of the tides in the naval disaster and beyond. The historian relates that, in addition to the power of the storm, the ships are suddenly overwhelmed by the incoming tide:

For a short while these [cliffs] were avoided, though with difficulty. Then the tide (*aestus*) started to turn and flow with the wind, and it proved impossible to hold to the anchors and to bale out the waters that came crashing over the vessels. Horses, pack-

animals, baggage, and even weapons were jettisoned to lighten the hulls, which were shipping water through their sides and from the waves flooding over them. As the Ocean is more violent than any other sea, and Germany transcends other countries in the brutality of its climate, just so did that disaster surpass others in its bizarre nature and magnitude. They had hostile shores all around, and a deep so vast that it is believed to be the final sea, where land ends (*hostilibus circum litoribus aut ita uasto et profundo ut credatur nouissimum at sine terris mare*) ... Finally with the ebbing tide (*relabente aestu*) and the favorable wind, some ships returned ...

(*Ann. 2.23.4–24.1, 24.3, trans. Yardley 2008*)

Here Tacitus clearly blends two natural phenomena: the storm and the tide. Moreover, he detaches momentarily from Germanicus' calamity to generalize the intimidating experience of tides at the world's northern end. As Romm succinctly notices, Tacitus moves from this particular instance of Oceanic power to a more general hydrologic principle, and he colors the North Sea with "the terrifying attributes of the archaic Greek *apeirona ponton*" (Romm 1992, 146). Let us hold on to Romm's point for a moment; below we amplify it by providing an intertextual reading with Silius, an apt tidal precedent that is more germane to Tacitus than the archaic Greek discourse of the "boundless sea."

In the second trope, in which we move from the *Annals* to the earlier *Germania*, Tacitus frames the North Sea within puzzling geographical and historical circumstances that have repeatedly raised scholarly eyebrows. The historian relates the following rather curious information about the very site of Germanicus' shipwreck:

Nay, we have even tried the ocean itself there: the legend has reported that there still exist columns of Hercules, either because Hercules did come there or we have agreed to assign to his greatness whatever is anywhere remarkable. Nor did Drusus Germanicus lack daring, but the ocean blocked his exploration of itself as well as of the achievements of Hercules (*sed obstitit Oceanus in se simul atque in Herculem inquiri*). Then no one made the attempt, and it seemed more pious and reverent to believe in the deeds of the gods than to get to know them (*mox nemo temptauit, sanctiusque ac reuerentius uisum de actis deorum credere quam scire*).

(*Ger. 34.2, trans. Benario 1999*)

Romm (1992, 147) compresses both incongruities of this passage and provides a possible explanation for them: "It is surprising for one thing that Tacitus places the Pillars near the mouth of the Rhine

rather than Gibraltar, and for another that he claims Drusus's expedition as the final Roman trial of the North Sea, ignoring the above-mentioned operations of Germanicus. ... [W]e can ascribe these distortions to Tacitus's deliberate mythopoiesis." To elaborate on Romm, Tacitus describes the North Sea in historically vague and geographically inaccurate terms to mystify its coordinates between reality and imagination. In Tacitus' narrative this polarization is translated into a tension between the Romans' conquered, surveyed world and the distant, fabulous lands that lie beyond their dominion. In this sense the North Sea is situated at the limits of the known world, and therefore human endeavor is the ultimate limit of Germanicus' potential. Building on a seminal reading by Pagán (1999), we can read this locale as a watery Teutoburg: much like his visit to that macabre site, Germanicus' crossing into the North Sea dramatizes his temporal, spatial, and political transgression under Tiberius.

It is significant to remember, however, that the representation of the North Sea in the *Germania* and the *Annals* owes something to similar descriptions found in another of the historian's early works, the *Agricola*. In fact, such emphasis on seascapes harkens back to the powerful portrayal of the water elements in the British isles and their impenetrability. In the *Agricola*, Tacitus portrays his father-in-law as the most effective in a series of leaders of the Roman army in Britain. Although facing many dangers, Agricola finally manages to control the island, especially because he begins his exploratory mission by circumnavigating Britain, thus, in the words of Clarke "circumscribing its insularity" (Clarke 2001, 112): "Then for the first time the Roman fleet having sailed around the island confirmed it to be Britain" (*tunc primum Romana classis circumuecta insulam esse Britanniam adfirmavit*, Ag. 10.4). Tacitus hastens to add a few lines later that though the nature of the ocean has been illustrated by many a writer in the past, he can only assert with certainty that "nowhere has the sea more potent influence" (*nusquam latius dominari mare*, Ag. 10.6) because of the many tidal currents "that penetrate the land deeply and invest it, and even steal into the heart of the hills and mountains as though into their native element" (*sed influere penitus atque ambire, et iugis etiam ac montibus inseri uelut in suo*, Ag. 10.6). Once again, as we saw also above in the case of the North Sea, Tacitus blurs the natural boundaries here by making Agricola assert supremacy over the Ocean.

In the sixth year of the operations, Agricola sets in motion not only the soldiers on land but also the *nauticus miles* at sea, as the conquest of mountains and forests is now coordinated with the penetration of the secrets of the seas. Such wide invasion is confirmed also by the enemy. Consider the famous words of Calgacus: "No lands beyond this

and not even the sea are safe ... now the uttermost boundaries of Britain lie open" (*nullae ultra terrae ac ne mare quidem securum ... nunc terminus Britanniae patet*, Ag. 30.1, 3). It is true, as succinctly put by Clarke, "the threats that are made to Britain's island identity in the course of the text allow for an exploration of where the true limits of *Romanitas* and *libertas* lie" (Clarke 2001, 112). Yet this is not only about being a good man under a bad emperor: this is about how to be an effective good man and general, which can be achieved only through dominion over the water element and its magically cleansing qualities. Even at Agricola's weakest moment in Britain, namely his recall by Domitian, Tacitus focuses on the image of Agricola "in the very straits of the Ocean" (*in ipso freto Oceani*, Ag. 40.2), when Domitian's freedman bears the message of the general's recall to Rome. To be sure, as Clarke suggests, though Britain's insularity has been reduced to the status of a mere "strait," nevertheless there remains a certain air of ambiguity. There is no ambiguity concerning Agricola himself; if someone is cast in a negative light, it is certainly the emperor and his minions, acting surreptitiously and lacking the civility of a civilized (and civilizing) person such as Agricola himself. The general's symbolic downfall takes place at the very domain of his success, the *fretum Oceani*, an area he has masterfully tamed and conquered. As Clarke observes, "The landscapes in which these imperial commanders operate are evocative of the heroic Republican world and the historiography which went alongside its aggressive imperialism" (Clarke 2001, 108). She adds in a footnote, "It is worth noting the shift of the image of Ocean as no longer the proof of a great campaigning exploit, but now a muted barrier, or not one at all. ... [T]he traditional historiographical topos of the commander surpassing a mighty boundary may be toned-down in accordance with the times, and the new geographical image ... may be appropriate for the new muted heroism" (Clarke 2001, n. 43). What we clearly see then is the manipulation of the topographical details to portray the hero as a deft or inept master of seascapes, even when such adroitness does not necessarily warrant ultimate success, especially under a bad emperor.

Still where Agricola succeeds, Germanicus does not rise to the occasion, and though he can control the landscape, the hazardous waters fail him. Germanicus proves unable to tame the water elements in the North Sea. The liminality of the German coast, compared with Agricola's temporarily successful mastery of seascapes, can further elucidate Germanicus' portrait. To illustrate our point, we refocus the Tacitean passages on the North Sea in the *Germania* and the *Annals* through Hannibal's topographical circumstances in Silius' *Punica*.

We begin by establishing a broadly common context for Germanicus and Hannibal through thematic resonances that

encourage this exploration. The tidal experience at the Pillars of Hercules and the hopeful general oblivious to his untenable position and doom are components of the characterization of Germanicus and Hannibal. Early in his epic Silius creatively reconstructs and amplifies the symbolic resonance of a tidal episode based on a kernel in Livy (21.21.9). This is Hannibal's pilgrimage at the Herakleion of Gades and it takes place before his ill-starred march to Rome. In the *Punica*, Hannibal stands at the original Pillars of Hercules-Melqart and marvels at the images of the Labors engraved at the doors of his temple. Critics have long established that Hannibal fails to decode the cautionary message of this ecphrasis. As he desires and aspires to the heroic images that he views, he blindly pursues his destructive trajectory. His deluded reading of the Herakleion doors is immediately followed by a second mystifying vision created by the poet. Hannibal turns his gaze to the Atlantic tides, which appear to him as enigmatic as the Labors of his hero:

After a varied imagery of virtue sated his eyes, he sees next a marvelous sight: the sea rushing suddenly on the lands with the mass of the rising deep, and the fields dripping with the invading sea, and no encircling shores (*surgentis mole profundī / inuēctum terris subitum mare nullaue circa / litora*), and the fields inundated by the invading water. For, where Nereus rolls forth from his blue caverns and churns up the waters of Neptune from the bottom, the sea rushes forward in flood, and the Ocean, loosening its hidden springs, attacks with furious waves. Then the shallows, as if moved to the depths by the fierce trident, wrestle to impose the swollen sea on the lands. But soon the water turns and glides back with ebbing tide (*tractoque relabitur aestu*); and then ships, robbed of the sea, are stranded on the ground, and the sailors, pouring over their benches, wait for the sea. It is the moon, the moon that moves this realm of wandering Cymothoe and the struggles of the deep; driving her chariot through the sky, the moon draws the sea back and forth, and Tethys follows in unison. These things were viewed in haste by the general, because many things trouble him.

(*Pun.* 3.45–61)

In her discussion of this episode, Manolaraki (2010) demonstrates that Silius contrasts Hannibal's limited visual and cognitive experience of the tidal flow to his own authoritative exegesis of the phenomenon in its symmetrical entirety. The Carthaginian is portrayed consistently with minimal control over marine bodies. Through his own exposition of the flow and the inevitable ebb, Silius pits Hannibal's ignorance of his fate to his own authorial omniscience of the historical outcome,

exemplified as a scientific and religious understanding of natural phenomena. The astounded Hannibal at the Pillars of Hercules unknowingly performs his predetermined loss by the teleological scheme of Roman destiny, which is as firmly fixed as the cosmos itself. In his fine reading of Hannibal as a tragic hero, Ganiban aptly summarizes his limited worldview: “Ultimately he [Hannibal] is forced to play from a script whose ending has already been written but which he was never allowed to see” (Ganiban 2010, 78).

Tacitus’ combined narrative of the North Sea in the *Annals* and the *Germania* is analogous to that of the Atlantic tides in the *Punica*, as well as contrasted to the positive interaction which Agricola enjoys with the British seascapes. Tacitus’ mysteriously dislocated mapping of the Pillars in Germany and his attention to the general tidal principles within the circumstantial context of Germanicus’ shipwreck nod to an abstract mythopoiesis of world boundaries (as Romm argues) and to Silius’ specific mythopoiesis of Hannibal’s tidal confrontation at Gades. Similarly, Tacitus’ reference to Germanicus’ father in the *Germania* and the glaring omission of Germanicus’ own campaigns can be interpreted as an inverse highlighting of his disaster in that very location. Tacitus can be credited with coining the concept “conspicuous by absence” (*Ann.* 3.76). Germanicus’ prominent absence from the history and geography of the northern tides in the *Germania* opens a mythopoietic narrative space for the looming figure of Hannibal. This is not an argument *ex silentio*, since an allusion may function as lucidly through the modality of absence as well as presence. For example, Zissos (1999) has delimited the helpful concept of “negative allusion” to show how Valerius Flaccus marks and marginalizes unselected mythical variants of the Argonauts’ tale. By generating a glaring absence or a contradiction in the strict narrative logic, Zissos argues, a “negative allusion” opens a wider semantic field around the narrative and fruitfully complicates interpretation. In the same vein, Tacitus’ attention to the tides in the *Annals*, his historical and geographical incongruities, and the negative space of Germanicus’ absence activate the connection to Hannibal’s shadow that colors Germanicus as a tragic figure. In short, Germanicus’ and Hannibal’s ignorance of their fortunes is similarly acted out through the paradigmatic image of tides at the world’s end.

Our second example of how Silius’ Hannibal informs Tacitus’ Germanicus occurs in the context of his tour in Egypt (*Ann.* 2.60–61). The papyrological evidence for this event and the parallel references in Pliny the Elder, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio have been collated by Weingärtner in his comprehensive study *Die Ägyptenreise des Germanicus* (1969). In his effort to ascertain the historical and topographical accuracy of this trip *vis-à-vis* the parallel record,

Weingärtner focuses about two thirds of his 216-page analysis on our most detailed source, Tacitus. Unsurprisingly, recent scholarship has focused less on Tacitus' historical accuracy or *realia* and more on Germanicus' literary portraiture. In his introduction of the episode in the *Annals*, Goodyear aptly condenses its ambient malaise: "Germanicus here cuts a sorry figure, maundering plaintively over the unpleasantness of his voyage and separation from his father, grandmother, mother, brothers, children, and kinsmen" (1981, 374). With equal intratextual sensitivity, Santoro L'Hoir (2006) brings to the surface Tacitus' verbal registry of vision/knowledge and darkness/ignorance for Germanicus: the repetition of *noscere* and its cognates (e.g., *cognoscit*, *noscendas*, *cognoscendae*, *sciens*, *incognitum*, *nouerat*, *nota*), related terms (e.g., *ignara*, *sapientia*) and their cognitive opposites (e.g., *secreti*, *occulta*, *incerti*, *ambiguas*) couple Germanicus' foiled quest for knowledge and comprehension of the world with uninformed reactions to his immediate environment (cf. also Lauletta 1998, 264–314 on the use of poetic vocabulary by Tacitus). Less obviously epistemic vocabulary reinforces the same impression. For example, on his fateful way to Syria, Germanicus visits the prophetic waters of Clarian Apollo in Lydia. Tacitus tells us that the priest, who drank from a secret fountain (*fontis arcani aqua*, *Ann.* 2.54.3), prophesized to Germanicus his early death in riddles (*per ambages*). Santoro L'Hoir highlights the synergy of divine and human forces against Germanicus by paralleling his seeking of *arcana* to Augustus' dictate against senatorial travel in Egypt, one of his *dominationis arcana* (*Ann.* 2.59.3). Based on this lexical material, she persuasively argues that "the recurrence of such terms in Tacitus' portrayal of Germanicus is a further illustration of the historian's tragic consciousness in framing the prince's character" (Santoro L'Hoir 2006, 92).

This accurate but broad link between Germanicus and tragic traditions of self-ignorance and self-awareness is strengthened by forging a specific connection with Silius' Hannibal as a tragic hero. Tacitus' vocabulary of physical and cognitive vision stands in contrast to Hannibal's self-deception of autonomous agency and success. Our approach builds on what Ganiban eloquently calls "the tragedy of Hannibal's heroism" (Ganiban 2010, 96). Yet whereas Ganiban arrives at this conclusion by reading the incarnation of Dido in Hannibal, we demonstrate his tragic ignorance by pointing to cognitive vocabulary that is echoed in Tacitus' Germanicus.

A few examples of Germanicus' physical and epistemic vision contextualize the comparison with Hannibal. Armed with Tacitus' adamant assertion that sight-seeing is the real reason behind Germanicus' trip to Egypt (*Ann.* 2.59.1) and centered on Santoro

L'Hoir's hermeneutic axis of knowledge/ignorance, we now turn to a few highlights of this trip. Given the brief scope of our discussion and the focus on Silius, we omit Germanicus' visit to the temples of Thebes and the colossus of Memnon. Instead, we focus selectively on his arrival at Canopus, on Lake Moeris, and on the first Cataract:

Sed Germanicus, nondum comperto profectionem eam incusari, Nilo subuehebatur, orsus oppido a Canopo. condidere id Spartani ob sepultum illic rectorem nauis Canopum, qua tempestate Menelaus Graeciam repetens diuersum ad mare terramque Libyam deiectus. inde proximum amnis os dicatum Herculi, quem indigenae ortum apud se et antiquissimum perhibent, eosque, qui postea pari uirtute fuerint, in cognomentum eius adscitos. ... Ceterum Germanicus aliis quoque miraculis intendit animum ... disiectasque inter et uix peruias arenas instar montium eductae pyramides certamine et opibus regum, lacusque effossa humo, superfluentis Nili receptacula; atque alibi angustiae et profunda altitudo, nullis inquirentium spatiis penetrabilis.

(*Ann.* 2.60.1–2, 61.1)

Germanicus, however, starting out from the town of Canopus, sailed up the Nile before learning that his journey was meeting with disapproval. (The Spartans founded Canopus in honor of their helmsman Canopus, who was buried there when Menelaus, heading back to Greece, was driven off course to the land of Libya in a distant sea.) From Canopus, he came to the next mouth of the Nile, which is dedicated to Hercules, who, the natives claim, was born in their land and was the most ancient Hercules. (Others who later demonstrated a similar fortitude were simply given his name, they say.) ... Germanicus, however, had his attention focused on other wonders too ... the pyramids that, because of the rivalry of wealthy kings, were erected like mountains amidst the shifting and barely passable sands; a lake sunk in the ground to receive the overflow of the Nile; and, elsewhere, narrow gorges, the river depths that none can plumb.

(*trans.* Yardley 2008)

Germanicus' entire Egyptian tour is circumscribed by two bookends: at Canopus it is his ignorance of imperial displeasure at this transgression; at Syene it is his inability to measure the depth of the first Cataract, which is both narrow and impenetrable. Germanicus' visit to Aswan echoes distantly the tradition of imperial quests for the Nile's sources (Murphy 2004, 143–144), and the scene is perhaps set up by Tacitus to recall Caesar's interest in the origins of the Nile in Lucan's *Civil War* 10, an episode to which Silius offers a metapoetic gesture in the narrative of Hannibal at Gades. This particular

geographical mystery was indeed so deep that it was solved successfully only in the nineteenth century. Far from this ultimate prize of knowledge and power, Germanicus must remain within the Roman border at Syene and acquiesce with merely viewing the surface of the Cataract. His world is relentlessly circumscribed by imperial rule, history, and fate.

Germanicus' starting point is Canopus. Set programmatically, this tension between our knowledge of Tiberius' disapproval and Germanicus' unawareness of it certainly gilds his tour with dramatic irony. Yet Tacitus' aetiological asides on Canopus and the nearby Nilotic mouth indicate that his narrative is informed by more than Greek tragedy. As critical readings of the past fifty years have illustrated, epic fondness for ethnographical digressions supplements their function within their particular narrative context. Tacitus develops Germanicus' visit to the most westerly mouth of the Nile, commonly known as Canopic, with a mythological aside that evokes its alternative name: Heracleotic. Tacitus' topography here is essentially accurate, even allowing for Pliny the Elder's assertion that the Canopic and Heracleotic mouths are different despite their proximity (*Nat.* 5.64). However, the question of narrative purpose behind Tacitus' excursus on Hercules remains. Weingärtner (1969, 139) conjectures that through the reminiscence of the legendary hero, Tacitus diverts the negative implications of Germanicus' detour at the debauched Canopus. However, a different approach is possible. As Goodyear remarks, Tacitus' reference to the temple of Hercules imports into his narrative Herodotus' digression in Book 2 (2.43–45) on the timeline of Hercules' cults around the Mediterranean. Herodotus expresses no doubt that the original Hercules is Egyptian and that his other cults are later and simply follow that of the Egyptian hero/god. In the context of his comparative investigation, Herodotus claims that he personally observed, among others, a temple of Hercules in Tyre:

I wanted to understand these matters as clearly as I could, so I also sailed to Tyre in Phoenicia, since I had heard that there was a sanctuary sacred to Heracles there, and I found that the sanctuary there was lavishly appointed with a large number of dedicatory offerings. In it were two pillars, one of pure gold, the other of emerald which gleamed brightly at night. I talked to the priests of the god there and asked them how long ago the sanctuary was founded, and I discovered that they too disagreed with the Greek account, because, according to them the sanctuary of the god was founded at the same time as Tyre, which was 2,300 years ago, they said. I also saw another sanctuary of Heracles in Tyre, which is called the sanctuary of

In his commentary on the above passage, Lloyd (1975, 205) argues persuasively that the Phoenician god in question here is none other than Melqart. His temple, complete with two pillars, clearly evokes its western equivalent at the other end of the Mediterranean at Gades. This Herodotean topography easily ushers Hercules/Melqart of Tyre and Gades into Tacitus' Canopic temple. The conflation of the three temples colors Germanicus' visit with overtones reminiscent of Hannibal's visit to the Herakleion of Gades and the start of his campaign. Egypt and Gades momentarily overlap as liminal starting points for both characters in their doomed campaigns. Tacitus' imagination might have been also fueled by Silius' curious comment that the priests of the Herakleion are clad in linen from Pelusium, the most western mouth of the Nile (*Pun.* 3.25). Moreover, Tacitus' designation of the Egyptian coast as *Libya* is certainly as old as Herodotus, but it is also Silius' designated name for Hannibal's fatherland. These narrative clues cumulatively suggest that Germanicus' visit at the temple of Heracles is shadowed by the same doom that attends Hannibal's pilgrimage at Gades.

Tacitus' action of the foundation of Canopus further adumbrates Hannibal's presence. Goodyear reminds us that the story of Menelaus circulated widely and that "Tacitus likes to expand or digress on origins, often blithely crossing the hinterland where history fades into myth" (Goodyear 1981, 381). Yet, once again, aetiological mythopoiesis does not stand in the way of specific pertinence to the narrative. Tacitus' reference to Menelaus' *tempestas* and shipwreck is a reminder of Germanicus' all-too-recent adventure at the northern Pillars of Hercules. Additionally, Tacitus' designation of the northern coast of Egypt as *diuersum mare* abets the same effect of marginality as suggested by his placing a liminal Hercules in both Germania and Egypt. The alienation implied in *diuersum* distinctly conjures the eschatological conceit of the sea as the ultimate boundary (cf. Mela 1.68.4, 1.89.5; Ov., *Tr.* 3.2.10; Plin., *Nat.* 3.307, 4.9.7, 4.11.5; Tac., *Ag.* 23, *Ann.* 15.37.2) and aligns the Egyptian and German shorelines. Finally, another topographical element that seems foreboding for Germanicus is the reference to Canopus' tomb (*sepultum*). This keeps alive the funereal premonition that has been planted in the readers' mind at the Clarian Apollo in Lydia (*Ann.* 2.54).

This hint is further strengthened in Germanicus' visit to Lake Moeris in northwestern Faiyum. Tacitus does not mention the lake by name, but designates its primary role as a reservoir for the Nile's overflow. Here the historian places Germanicus within the tradition of

miracula, natural or manmade landmarks primarily associated with water (André 2007). Yet the underworld associations of this particular waterscape make it difficult to miss the morbid subtext of Germanicus' viewing. The two definitions provided in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* for the resonant word *receptacula* are "receptacle, repository, container" and "refuge, shelter, retreat." In this second sense, *receptaculum* is often associated with *portus* to denote a gulf, a bay, or generally a haven from the high seas. For example, Pliny the Younger describes Trajan's port in these terms (*litus importuosum hoc receptaculo utetur*, "a shore without havens uses this shelter," *Ep.* 6.31.17). This marine association, however, also activates one of the most ancient metaphors in Greco-Roman literature and art: that of death as an arrival into a harbor. Cicero gives us a lucid image of this metaphor in his *Tusculan Disputations*. Endorsing the Epicurean/Stoic concept of suicide as an appropriate response to intense physical pain (*doloribus acerrumis*, *Tusc.* 5.117) he argues:

Sin forte longinquitate producti uehementius tamen torquent, quam ut causa sit cur ferantur. Quid est tandem, di boni, quod laboremus? Portus enim praesto est, aeternum nihil sentiendi receptaculum.

(*Tusc.* 5.117)

If these [pains] happen to be protracted, and they torture him too painfully for there to be any ground for enduring them, whatever reason is there, in god's name, for us to struggle? There is a haven at hand, an eternal refuge where there is no feeling.

Cicero here clearly associates life with a voyage, while the safe haven stands for death. His image here is in line with an earlier passage, where he equates suicide with a determined plunge into the sea. There, a benevolent god exhorts the hard-pressed man to jump ship and trust the waves to carry him home (*eiice te navi ... per undas currus ... quo uelis, perferent*, *Tusc.* 2.67).

Germanicus' gazing at the Nilotic *receptacula* can be understood as an unconscious pre-viewing of such an arrival. The underworld connotation emerges further once we consider the presence of a well-attested Pharaonic labyrinth only a short distance from Lake Moeris. This monumental structure is reported in tandem with the lake by Herodotus (2.148–149) and Strabo (17.1.37–38), as both authors claim eyewitness experience, and also by Diodorus (1.66), Mela (1.55–56), and Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 36.19). The controversy surrounding the chronology and exact location of this monument as compared to the textual record (discussed by Evans 1991) does not pertain to the authors' concurrence on two basic themes: first, the Labyrinth is a mortuary temple, perhaps even a royal mortuary; second, part of it is

underground, traversed in darkness, or entirely inaccessible. Armayor, who believes that the Labyrinth is largely a Herodotean construction, has long identified links with Pythagorean, and especially Homeric, underworld topography: “If there is an underground western channel that connects Moeris with the Libyan Syrtis (Hdt. 2.150.1) there is the mysterious river *Periphlegethon* flowing into Acheron, and the river Ocean that brings Odysseus and takes him away (*Od.* 10.511ff., 11.639). If Lake Moeris has its Labyrinthine house of the Dead (Hdt. 2.148ff.), Homer’s Acheron has its own dank house of the dead, presided over by its own King Minos (*Od.* 10.512, 11.568ff.). Both Acheron and Moeris are great and mysterious funerary lakes of the dead with great and mysterious tributary connections” (Armayor 1977–1978, 70). As a literary artifice the Labyrinth is “real” and therefore useful to Tacitus who follows the Herodotean tradition on Lake Moeris (Goodyear 1981, 385).

Although Tacitus does not name the Labyrinth explicitly, its presence near the lake and its potential as a sightseeing stop for Germanicus does not escape Weingärtner: “lässt sich aus Tac. *Ann.* 2.61.1 entnehmen, wenn auch die kurze Notiz des Historikers es weder gestattet, den Aufenthalt in die Reise nilauf – oder – abwärts einzureihen, noch über Einzelheiten des möglichen Parusievelaufs (Besuch des Suchosheiligtums in Arsinoe oder des ‘Labyrinthus’ bei der Pyramide Amenemhêts III.) Aufschluss gibt” (1969, 149). This is a reasonable conjecture, especially since Germanicus’ viewing of Moeris follows hard on the heels of the Pyramids, the royal mausolea *par excellence*. The looming of the mortuary Labyrinth at Moeris shadows Germanicus’ sightseeing with the same aura of impending doom attending all his trails. To place Germanicus near the crypts of the Moeris Labyrinth is to highlight the cryptic political and cosmic forces tightening their grip on him.

Germanicus’ ominous waterscape of the Moeris *miraculum* evokes Hannibal’s similarly ill-timed viewing of the deadly Phlegrean fields in Campania (*miracula lustrat*, *Pun.* 12.112). Silius tells us that, in the midst of his inconclusive siege of Puteoli, Hannibal tours the surrounding area with his Capuan hosts (*Pun.* 12.110–157). In this geographical excursus Hannibal’s exposure to infernal sites, such as the Lucrine lake, the lake Avernus, and the opening to Acheron, not only reveals the general’s connection to Herculean locales but also points to the inextricable association of the general with places that foreshadow calamity. The sulphurous and volcanic nature of Campania underscores the instability of the place and the risks inherent in such a visit. Hannibal’s former vigor, already weakened by his stay in Capua, is further undermined by the poet, who now emphasizes the perilous sights and poisonous smell of the swampy

fields: both the water elements of the lethal lakes (or even the burial place at the promontory of Misenum) and the liquidating but simultaneously petrifying magma and lava of Vesuvius adumbrate Hannibal's visual inability to comprehend nature and foreshadow his failure at the end of the book to seize Rome for the final time.

In her excellent discussion of this episode, Muecke shows that these infernal Campanian *miracula* (*stagnorum terraeque simul miracula lustrat*, 12.112) send Hannibal "a dire warning that becomes so much more explicit in the last part of the book" (Muecke 2007, 90). We propose that a corresponding trajectory is at work in Tacitus' portrait of Germanicus: just as Hannibal turns from the boundless Atlantic tides to the lakes of Phlegra while his fortunes decline, Germanicus moves from the northern tides to Lake Moeris and closer to his death in Syria.

The thematic and structural similarities between the two waterscapes are anchored in the narrative by specific verbal echoes between Hannibal and Germanicus. Silius marks Hannibal's self-centered ignorance and gradual realization of his defeat as a journey from blindness to vision, with vocabulary echoed in what we may call Santoro L'Hoir's *noscere* semantics for Germanicus. For example, during the siege of Saguntum, an arrogant Hannibal cries that he will teach the Saguntines how powerless the Ebro treaty is (*noscas*, 1.480). Later in the battle he calls on Hercules to acknowledge his valor (*agnosces*, 1.512). He angrily dismisses the Roman envoys at Saguntum, exclaiming that he knows there is no turning back from first blood (*notum*, 2.21). He resolves to break the treaty, mistakenly trusting fate (*certus*, 1.268). Later he sends Bostar to consult Jupiter Ammon (*casus scire futuros*, 3.12), but the oracle is too enigmatic to elicit a response from him. Elsewhere, he joyfully asserts that his infant son will follow in his steps (*agnosco*, 3.76). With similar language, he rejoices at recognizing Varro on the battlefield of Cannae (*nosco ... nosco*, 9.421). Oblivious to the decline of his leadership and the morale of his men after their winter quartering at Capua, he chides them for not following up on their previous victories (*nescire addere cursum*, 12.45). His delusional self-confidence is ironically echoed in the last book of the epic. As he encourages his soldiers to fight at Zama, he acknowledges them individually (*nosco dextram*, 17.296). Given the denouement of the final battle, his acknowledgment appears more pathetic than uplifting. In contrast to Hannibal's own misperception of reality, Silius consistently underlines his limitations. Hannibal is inspired by prescient Juno (*haud inscia cladum*, 1.41 ~ *haud inscia fati*, 10.338), who deceives him by disguise (*ignarum Poenum*, 10.86). He becomes aware of his predicament only gradually and intermittently, lamenting that fate prohibits him from

knowing the future (*Fortuna /... casusque iubet nescire futuros*, 10. 574–575). Such powerlessness to relate to (foreign) water elements, especially places that are naturally veiled by an air of mystique, runs full circle in the last book of the poem, when, having been recalled to Carthage (17.152–157), Hannibal finds himself in dire straits, unwilling to forsake the soil of Italy, a place by now so familiar to him (17.213–217) but also at the same time so alien. Incapable of managing the sea, he attempts to return to the Italian mainland to no avail, hindered by a great storm that bars him from the Ausonian landscape forever. This is where we can see the convergence of two tropes, that of navigation, as we saw it in Tacitus' *Agricola* and *Germania*, and that of vision, as exemplified by Silius' Hannibal, who ultimately loses the "war" with the mute, relentless hostility of the sea in the final storm that brings him back to Africa. Ganiban succinctly states the point: "Silius' Hannibal is not allowed to know that Jupiter, fate, and history demand that he lose" (Ganiban 2010, 90).

This limited worldview that characterizes Hannibal's and Germanicus' heroism is reflected in the resonant adjective *arcanus*. As Santoro L'Hoir demonstrates, Tacitus' use of *arcana* hints at Germanicus' ignorance of his destiny as directed by Apollo's prophecy *per ambages* and by Augustus' prohibition of senatorial travel to Egypt. Similarly in the *Punica*, Proteus (*ambiguus uates*, *Pun.* 7.436) delivers a prophecy designated as *arcana deum* (*Pun.* 7.494). The seer predicts Rome's future greatness and Carthage's destruction, both of which remain of course hidden from Hannibal. Following on Proteus' clairvoyance, the Cumaean Sibyl who prophesies Hannibal's death to Scipio is *grauida arcanis* (*Pun.* 13.494), while her incantation is *arcanum murmur* (*Pun.* 13.428). Marcellus' preparations in Sicily take place with *arcana cura* (*Pun.* 14.188) and set in motion the divine *arcana* at the human level.

In short, Hannibal's and Germanicus' trajectories from fortune to failure are enacted narratively by a physical and symbolic restriction of their natural environment. Both move inexorably from prohibitive tides at the limits of the world to landlocked water bodies with infernal underground. These sites/sights embody Hannibal's and Germanicus' fateful unawareness of the political, historical, and cosmic teleology that has them in its grip. Hannibal's physical alienation from both centers of power (Carthage and Rome), his optimistic but misguided heroism, his vulnerability to Hanno's attacks against him in the Carthaginian senate, his recall to Carthage after his failure, and the storm that attends him as he leaves Italy, all evoke Germanicus' fate: his removal from Rome, his foiled military expeditions and initiatives, and his obliviousness to the web of Tiberius and Piso gradually tightening around him. Through their

physical and cognitive gazes Hannibal and Germanicus seek to explore, to understand, and to dictate their phenomenological reality. Both consistently fail to do so because they do not grasp the abstract dynamics formulating their experience. As in the case of Agricola, the nets of fate are inextricable.

To acknowledge that Tacitus' Germanicus is informed by Silius' Hannibal is to overcome the limitations of the simplified typology Roman vs. Foreign and to unravel the complexities of both characters. Hannibal has been justly characterized as the "real hero of the *Punica*" (Matier 1989) precisely because his passion and tenacity are recognizably Roman; on the other hand Germanicus' flamboyant emotionalism and his oriental wanderlust render him suspiciously foreign. Both characters find themselves surmounted by divine and human hierarchies beyond their control; both miss the cautionary clues of their natural environment and remain ignorant of their fixed place within the relentless churn of Roman history. Silius and Tacitus exploit a blended imagery of cosmic and political order, a conceptual overlap that underpins so much of Roman ideology and literature. Both marginalize Hannibal and Germanicus and fashion them as tragic heroes through their use of similar narrative tropes.

The exploitation of such epic overtones in the representation of Germanicus fuels Tacitus' historical imagination and amplifies our understanding of his epic literary sources beyond the well-trodden territory of Vergil's *Aeneid*. The distance that Tacitean scholarship will traverse can be measured by the continued willingness to perceive allusions across Latin literature that may otherwise go unnoticed. We hope that our work encourages future readers of Tacitus to follow interpretive paths that continue to open with every generation.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Germanicus' portrayal in Tacitus has been a controversial topic among critics. Various articles have explored the ambiguities of his character, as Tacitus shapes them drawing on various literary (biographical, historiographical, heroic, and epic) traditions. Among these studies, a landmark examination of Germanicus' character in the first two books of the *Annals* is the treatment of Pelling (1993), who underscores the contradictions and points to the anachronistic presence of Germanicus in Tacitus' historical framework. Previous discussions, most notably by Shotter (1968) and Ross (1973), include lengthy treatments of the relationship between Germanicus and Tiberius, highlighting the use of the character of Germanicus by the historian as a foil to the tyrannical

temperament of his uncle. O’Gorman (2000) proposes an interpretation of Germanicus as a reader of texts and literature. On the influence of Vergil on Tacitus’ portrayal of Germanicus, see, for instance, Bews (1972–1973). Giua (1991) offers an instructive discussion of the manipulation of landscape descriptions in Tacitus.

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Historian and Satirist

Tacitus and Juvenal

Catherine Keane

During the last phase of Tacitus' literary career and up until about 130 CE, the poet Juvenal was writing his five books of *Satires*. These sixteen hexameter poems are crammed with fiercely witty commentary on everyday social and moral problems, but they also feature scathing pronouncements on historical figures and crises. This is evidenced in the best-known and most quotable parts of Juvenal's *Satires*, the moralizing quips: the poet who gave us "honesty is praised – and shivers" (*Sat.* 1.74) and "pray for a sound mind in a sound body" (10.356) also declares that under the principate, "among the nobility, old age amounts to a prodigy" (4.97); that the emperor Nero's worst crimes were his artistic endeavors (8.221–223); and that Sejanus' trial consisted simply of a "wordy and weighty letter from Capreae" (10.71–72). These witticisms ornament dark and critical, albeit fragmentary, accounts of imperial history that naturally prompt comparison with Juvenal's senior contemporary Tacitus. In the senatorial historian and the muckraking poet we can see treatment of some of the same material, a certain affinity of viewpoints, and a similar penchant for epigrammatic wit – parallels that reflect the two authors' shared literary culture. At the same time, as the younger author, Juvenal was also able to draw on Tacitus' work – with significant consequences for the character of Roman satire itself, as I will argue below.

1. Family Trees

Syme describes Tacitus and Juvenal as “the last great names in the literature of the Romans” and as “parallel and coeval phenomena” (Syme 1958, 500). Syme’s loaded terms “last” and “great” indicate the two authors’ success in one respect: both pose as witnesses to the decline of Roman imperial government and social mores, including the particularly damaging reign of Domitian (Ramage 1989; Wilson 2003). The theme of national decline that pervades Tacitus’ works (despite brief gestures to the promising present) also dominates the first *Satire* of Juvenal, which proclaims that “there will be nothing further for posterity to add to our bad morals ... all vice stands at a peak” (*Sat.* 1.147–149). Juvenal implies that Roman public immorality has a history as dramatic as the political and military narratives of Tacitus.

Broad studies of imperial Latin literature note other qualities shared by Tacitus and Juvenal, such as the dark wit woven through many works of the era from Nero to Hadrian (Hutchinson 1993, 77). Syme notes the historian’s particular talent for satire (Syme 1958, 499; cf. 206), and in his earlier commentary on the *Annals*, Furneaux makes an especially strong pronouncement along these lines: “In one sense ... all the works of Tacitus are satire, for satire, in the various forms which it took under Persius, Petronius, Martial, and Juvenal, was the chief literary force of the age” (Furneaux 1896, 36). Furneaux’s definition of “satire” pointedly transcends ancient formal generic terms in joining hexameter poetry, prose-and-verse fiction, and epigram, not to mention prose historiography. It encompasses, on the large scale, pessimistic representation of human thought, motivation, and experience; as Furneaux puts it, Tacitus took “extreme acts as typical of the man, and extreme men as typical of the age” (Furneaux 1896, 37). It is also manifested on the small scale, in dry or caustic observations; by this definition there is plenty of Tacitean “satire.” To note a few examples, Galba “lacked vice more than he possessed virtue” (*Hist.* 1.49.2), while Poppaea “possessed everything except an honorable mind” (*Ann.* 13.45.2); Tiberius weighed in on a Senate debate on luxury and immorality, saying that “should there be any decline in morality, he would not fall short as a promoter of reform” (*Ann.* 2.33.5); Seneca ended a tense discussion of his future with Nero by expressing thanks, “which is how all conversations with despots end” (*Ann.* 14.56.4).

Other essays in this volume illuminate and explore the “satiric” qualities of Tacitus’ writing and perhaps ultimately chip away at the claim of one scholar that Tacitus would never have borrowed ideas from an author such as Juvenal (Townend 1973, 152 n. 24). I will note, however, that accepting Furneaux’s characterization of literature from Nero to Trajan changes the terms of our comparison of historian

and poet in an interesting way. As participants in an “age” driven by a particular “force,” Tacitus and Juvenal seem less like two sides of the same coin, each guided by the mandates of his genre, and more like members of the same literary stemma. Moreover, the respective positions of Tacitus and Juvenal shift. The magisterial elder author who shapes our modern view of early imperial history is imagined, instead, as the *recipient* of influence – and from a tradition with which his younger contemporary is much more closely affiliated. This reconception, though it can only be entertained so far, is a useful starting point in an examination of Tacitus’ possible influence on Juvenal. For while it makes Tacitus seem comparatively marginal in the “dominant” satiric tradition, it also underscores the point that Juvenal was not the first author to represent historical material with a blend of moralizing and wit. In his eyes, Tacitus must have represented a rich model.

A formidable contemporary example is likely to have seemed inviting, rather than intimidating, to Juvenal: after all, he was writing in a genre that had always fruitfully appropriated themes and diction from sources ranging from epic verse to comedy. Juvenal evokes this practice when he dubs his first book a “hodgepodge” (*farrago*, 1.86). This poet takes things further, however, working into his satire influences that are minimal or absent in the approaches of his predecessors Horace (65–8 BCE) and Persius (34–62 CE) and that reflect literary trends of the late first and early second centuries. Two outstanding examples are tragic and epic poetry, which also influence Tacitus’ shaping of historical narrative (Santoro L’Hoir 2006; cf. chapter 18 in this volume). There are smatterings of parody of these genres in Horace and Persius, but no heavy use of their language and stock scenes. In contrast Juvenal’s satire announces itself as grand and passionate; it likens everyday encounters and struggles to epic battles; its founding hero, the second century BCE poet Lucilius, rides a metaphorical chariot and brandishes a metaphorical sword (1.19–20, 165–166). Tragic diction and themes also color Juvenal’s laments for declining Roman morality and for the victims of vice. In the climax of his longest and most hysterical poem, he acknowledges the tragic quality of his tirade (6.634–637).

Another highly visible influence on Juvenal, declamation, reminds us of the rhetorical culture in which he and Tacitus participated. Tacitus’ interest in the development of rhetoric in the empire is attested to by his early *Dialogue on Orators*, and his own thorough training is evidenced by his success as an orator. His historical narrative is colored in part by effective manipulation of the rhetorical device of the *sententia* (Sinclair 1995). The educational system that Tacitus knew so well as an orator and as an author is also the system

that created Juvenal the satirist. Juvenal claims (1.15–17) to have undergone the training in persuasive and epideictic speaking that by the late first century CE constituted the standard secondary education for boys from well-off families. This assertion of credentials is, in the argument of *Satire* 1, meant to justify Juvenal's foray into poetry – and thus appears ironically to downplay the satirist's individual talent. At the same time it is also an un-ironic prompt to readers to notice Juvenal's considerable rhetorical skill. Marks of his declamatory training are visible all over the *Satires*: in his organization of many poems around specific themes (for instance, the disadvantages of life in contemporary Rome or the consequences of taking a wife); his illustration of arguments with suitable exempla from daily life, history, and myth; and his manipulation of passionate rhetoric and well-timed, epigrammatic wit (for some seminal analyses, see de Decker 1913; Kenney 1963; Anderson 1982, 293–339, 414–486; Braund 1988).

2. Historical Satire

Although the two authors may have been fraternal twins, so to speak, in the “age of satire,” we can still assume, and perceive, influence going in one direction. Most if not all of Tacitus' works would have been available to Juvenal as he began to compose his *Satires*. Although Juvenal often seems to be writing about the same world we see described by Martial (who died in 104) and even appears as an addressee in the epigrammatist's work, many scholars now date his early *Satires* after 110 (Hardie 1999; cf. Braund 1996, 16). This view was advanced forcefully by Syme, who even suggested that Juvenal had access to the first part of the *Annals* as he composed the early *Satires* (1–6) (Syme 1979, 277). At any rate, Juvenal was familiar with Tacitus' shorter works and most likely his *Histories* when he began to write. The satirist may be nodding to these works when he points to figures from the reign of Domitian in Book 1 as examples of modern degeneracy; indeed, the later he began writing, the more probable it is that Tacitus (rather than “recent” history) inspired these complaints. The gallery of rogues in *Satire* 1, where Juvenal explains his motivation to write, includes informers and corrupt officeholders who worked under the last Flavian: Massa, Carus, and Marius Priscus (1.35–36, 49–50; cf. Tac., *Ag.* 45.1–2; *Hist.* 4.50.2; Plin., *Ep.* 2.11–12). We may infer from particular passages in Juvenal's second and third books (*Satires* 6 and 7–9) that the poet was drawing on material from the *Annals* by that stage. As Tacitus turned his attention from civil war

and the Flavians to the Julio-Claudians, so Juvenal – most likely acknowledging the newly published *Annals* – looked back to stories from earlier imperial history. *Satire* 6 features vignettes of the notorious Julio-Claudian empresses Messalina and Agrippina. *Satire* 8 discusses a type seen throughout the *Annals*, the degenerate young aristocrat who betrays the moral standards of his ancestors (e.g., *Ann.* 2.27); one colorful target is Nero, whom Juvenal lambastes for the theatrical antics Tacitus also highlights (*Ann.* 14.14). Octavian is also cited for having acquired his political power through ruthless violence (8.241–243; cf. *Ann.* 1.10). The first people named in *Satire* 10, Juvenal’s meditation on the dangers of wish-fulfillment, are prominent victims of Nero whose fates are narrated by Tacitus (C. Cassius Longinus and Seneca, 10.15–18). As I will discuss in the last part of this essay, *Satire* 10 includes additional exempla from the *Annals*, treating that work as the authority not just on Julio-Claudian history but on the moral significance of particular episodes.

Juvenal clearly found things to admire in Tacitus’ accounts of historical events and figures. In the satirist’s portrayal of corruption and vice in high places and in his moral interpretations of notable political careers, Tacitus is present. I will examine the historian’s influence in some particular cases, but there is a more fundamental point to be made first. The largest piece of evidence for Juvenal’s interest in Tacitus is not any particularly Tacitean spin on historical material in the *Satires*, but the fact that Juvenal includes a significant number of names and much historical material in his poems in the first place. For this represents another Juvenalian innovation: the abundance of vignettes featuring known individuals or citing famous names, especially in Juvenal’s early *Satires*, is simply unparalleled in Horace and Persius (Jones 2007, 58–60). As for Lucilius, he earned his fame as a satirist who named names mainly by mocking his own contemporaries.

The influence of Tacitus is one of several interconnected avenues through which Roman history and its cast of characters enter satire’s generic recipe. Another is Juvenal’s declamatory style. When he mentions his education in *Satire* 1, Juvenal suggests a role for historical material in his work. At school the future satirist “gave counsel to Sulla to become a private citizen and sleep soundly” (1.16–17) – to translate, he practiced examples of the *suasoria*, a speech giving advice to a historical or mythological figure. Such exercises not only gave Roman schoolboys opportunities to practice persuasive rhetoric but also encouraged them to think of their own history as an always-relevant collection of symbolically important characters and crises. Juvenal the former rhetoric student was skilled at dramatizing key episodes, elaborating on their moral meaning, and even lacing

them with skillfully timed wit.

Historical subject matter also finds its way into satire via Juvenal's professed approach to moral attack and exposure. According to Juvenal's predecessors, satire was always meant to target wrongdoers and hypocrites in society, whatever their station, and expose them to ridicule. Lucilius, Horace says, "dared to ... strip off the hide in which everyone would go about in public, looking shiny, but being foul inside" (*Sat.* 2.1.62–65). His targets included political and military leaders, living as well as recently dead. Lucilius' successors, however, pull back noticeably from this aggressive stance, and their restraint becomes part of the story of post-republican satire (Freudenburg 2001). Horace professes only to be interested in chastising common vices; his political commentary tends to be oblique (Schlegel 2005). Persius lauds Lucilius too ("he cut into Rome," *Sat.* 1.114), but makes a point of turning satire inward: he advises self-correction as a substitute for criticism of others. There is no place in his poetry for putting senators or emperors – alive or dead – on parade.

In his programmatic first *Satire*, Juvenal follows the convention of invoking the fearless Lucilius and then backing off from this extreme paradigm as if from discretion and fear. He imagines that in his own day aggressive *ad hominem* satire could lead to the author's execution (in public, no less; 1.155–157). This leads to a compromise in the final lines: "I'll attempt what is allowed against those whose ashes are covered by the Flaminian and Latin Roads" (1.170–171). Juvenal's quarry will be the dead – seemingly a far cry from the high-profile targets of a satirist aiming to condemn, if not correct, society's wrongs. With this resolution Juvenal appears to contradict his claim that in composing his satire he is simply "fill[ing] capacious tablets in the middle of the crossroads" (1.63–64), reacting immediately to outrageous sights around him. He also seems to admit to a failure of nerve in the face of potential retaliation (Braund 1996, 120). He has just created the impression that a generic requirement to attack the powerful head on is fixed in the satiric tradition; he has also stressed that *his* age above all needs such an effort. Now he discards what he has represented as mandates of his genre and his time.

It is in fact inaccurate to suggest that Juvenal takes something away from satire with this move. First, neither Persius nor Horace followed a mandate of fearless *ad hominem* attack. Moreover, by the end of *Satire* 1 Juvenal has shown his readers that even "dead" material can seem alive. The informers of Domitian's era (lines 33–36), the cruel Caligula (43–44), the luxury-loving Maecenas (66), Nero's henchman Tigellinus (155), and other ghosts from the past are all evidently relevant as models for living miscreants or even still alive in this satirist's mind. The line between past and present blurs as

Juvenal jumbles together historical and contemporary examples. Furthermore, we will recognize still another contribution in Juvenal's "compromise" if we look at it from another side. This poet breaks rich new ground by promising to treat historical characters, exempla, and commentary, and his ostentatious vow at the end of *Satire* 1 is our first extant programmatic statement of this kind.

To be sure, "historical satire" is not Juvenal's dominant mode. The *Satires* are packed with the vignettes of everyday moral struggles and amusements that had always been the stuff of satire. The busy drama of daily life in Juvenal is populated with vividly drawn and stereotypical "ordinary" characters: freedmen, playboys, pathics, actors, immigrants, paupers, gluttons, prostitutes, gladiators, and tyrannical wives. Still, Juvenal feeds into this picture far more historical material than we see in Horace and Persius combined. He may have had satiric precedents, such as the mixed prose-verse *Ludus de morte Claudii* (better known as the *Apocolocyntosis*) attributed to Seneca, and possibly the poems by a contemporary of Martial named Turnus, who in one work mentioned Nero's poisoner Lucusta (Courtney 1993, 362; cf. Tac., *Ann.* 13.15.3; Suet., *Nero* 33.2). Works like Turnus' poems (now lost) and the *Apocolocyntosis* may have aroused readers' taste for satiric treatments of recent imperial scandal – and Juvenal, for his part, mentions Lucusta and Claudius – but we are limited to speculation. At any rate, as we survey Juvenal's poems it becomes glaringly apparent that they were written not simply in imitation of a satiric tradition, but in the shadow of monumental new historical works focusing on Rome and the empire in the past century. We may see Tacitus as not just influencing a near-contemporary author, but as helping that author reshape a genre – and into a form that many modern readers have come to see as quintessential Roman satire.

3. Personae and Protocol

There may also be an echo of Tacitus in the signature feature of the early *Satires*: namely, the indignant persona that Juvenal constructs for himself. The poet introduces himself to readers with claims that his angry verse is a means of unloading pent-up feelings: "Will I always be just a listener?" (1.1); "it is difficult *not* to write satire" (1.30); "who is so thick-skinned ... that he could hold himself in?" (1.30–31). *Indignatio*, he sums up, makes his poetry (1.79). This too distinguishes Juvenal from Horace and Persius, and even to an extent from Lucilius, whom the other satirists describe as fierce but not exactly angry. Only

Juvenal comes close to suggesting that Lucilius expressed anger in his verse (he “burned and bellowed,” 1.165–166), and this may be a projection of Juvenal’s own vision for satire. Thus, depending on how we read our surviving and emotionally varied fragments of Lucilius, Juvenal either revives or invents the angry satiric persona.

Juvenal’s angry persona is one device that shows his mastery of declamatory rhetoric. In some rhetorical contexts the indignant mode was not just a legitimate option but an opportunity for a virtuoso performance. Other genres, most notably historiography, could not embrace *indignatio* with the same gusto. In the prologue of the *Histories*, Tacitus acknowledges the dangers of writing history that shows either too much spiteful outspokenness (*libertas*) or obvious sycophancy (*adulatio*). He explains (admittedly in a tortuously indirect fashion) that both extremes undermine the appearance of authorial impartiality. This leads into Tacitus’ first articulation of the requirement for credible historical writing, to recount and analyze events “without partisanship or hatred” (*neque amore ... et sine odio*, *Hist.* 1.1.3). This is more neatly reprised in the *Annals* prologue (*sine ira et studio*, *Ann.* 1.1.3). There is a striking contrast between the historian’s mandate and the satirist’s apparent strategy of unapologetic *indignatio* and burning hatred (Braund 1996, 113; cf. Jones 2007, 20). What Tacitus declares to be a vice for the historian, Juvenal – perhaps first in his literary line – embraces as a virtue for the satirist.

There may be more happening here than a positioning of satire to follow conventions of rhetoric rather than of historiography. Juvenal may, like many readers of Tacitus, be less than convinced by the historian’s presentation of himself as an author who kept strong feelings away from his work. Juvenal’s own loud embrace of *indignatio* could be a joke at Tacitus’ expense – a rejection of the standards the historian set for himself, and in turn a suggestion that readers should be wary of such claims. The satirist may even have designed his own debut, which is studded with images and exempla from the Flavian period, as a send-up of Tacitus’ early work. When Juvenal belatedly attacks “ghosts” from the age of Domitian and earlier, he resembles Tacitus, who represents his *Agricola* as the first effort of a nearly broken spirit emerging from that traumatic period (*nunc demum redit animus*, *Ag.* 3.1). Tacitus explains in the biography’s prologue that while the last Flavian ruled, he and his senatorial peers were voiceless and thus helpless to prevent the emperor’s tyrannical acts or support his opponents. Thus, Freudenburg has argued that Juvenal means to parody the whole post-Domitianic “indignation industry” that had Tacitus and Pliny at its center (Freudenburg 2001, 234–242).

If this sort of parody is Juvenal’s aim, this suggests a much more aggressive and uncompromising generic agenda than many readers

have attributed even to this ruthless poet. For even a decade and a half after Domitian's death, the harsh fates of his opponents would still have haunted many politically active or connected Romans (Wilson 2003, 541–542). A book of poems that mocked the literary project of condemning Domitian and memorializing his victims – however overdone or self-serving that project may seem at times – could have shocked and alienated many readers. Still, even if Juvenal's sights are not trained on Tacitus and his fellow documenters of Domitian's reign, the performance of delayed anger in the *Agricola* may at least have inspired Juvenal to style his satiric debut as a similarly delayed discharge of emotions.

Juvenal's engagement with Tacitus in the area of authorial self-presentation may have a second chapter as well. In what is viewed as the second major phase of Juvenalian satire, the poet exchanges the angry persona for an "ironic" mask and correspondingly subtle and complex satiric strategies (Braund 1988). *Satire 7*, which introduces the third book of poems, describes the struggles of men in literary careers (poets, historians, case-pleaders, and teachers). The more or less sympathetic portrayal of writers in the imperial literary scene seems clearly indebted to Tacitus' *Dialogue on Orators*, and the two texts appear to use similar indirect modes of political criticism (Bartsch 1994, 98–147). Juvenal may also take a page from Tacitus in his introduction to the poem, where he sets the tone of his new book. *Satire 7* begins as a celebration of a happy turn of events for poets, a promise of support from Caesar (presumably Trajan or Hadrian) that will turn many writers' difficult lives around. Within twenty lines, however, the poem has been taken over by a different topic: the frustrations and humiliations faced by writers and intellectuals in the recent past. The brevity of the optimistic opening gesture recalls Tacitus' remark at *Hist.* 1.1.4 that he planned to write about the happy period of Nerva and Trajan at a future date when he had finished his dark accounts of the past. This time never came; Tacitus moved on to the *Annals* (and there he even alludes to a desire to cover the career of Augustus next; *Ann.* 3.24.4). As the historian inevitably looks to the past for material rather than give an account of the present, so the "new" Juvenal, now certainly aware of the *Annals*, shifts into backward-looking blame and complaint. If he is aiming to mock a general failure of contemporary authors to document candidly the reigns of Nerva and Trajan, Tacitus may not be his only target, but the echo is worth considering in light of the poem's other Tacitean elements.

4. The *Satires* on Tacitus?

Juvenal never explicitly judges Tacitus' work. He does often aim his satire at contemporary literary production, beginning with his complaint that Rome is choked with poets (1.1–18). Writers of prose history seem exempt from that attack. In the seventh *Satire* Juvenal dismisses historians as practitioners of a costly and thankless art, which involves endless expenditure of papyrus, lamp-oil, and time (7.98–104). Yet that poem presents unflattering descriptions of *all* the literary careers – including poetry-writing, case-pleading, and teaching – and historians receive a relatively tiny number of lines. Moreover, the description of the historian's plight does not apply to cases like that of Tacitus, who was not an impoverished professional (Courtney 1980, 362). The satirist may just be making a small joke with a brief treatment of the genre he describes as grand and swollen, but it is a joke that he has also made against himself, upon joining the enterprise of “wasting paper” (1.17–18).

The closest thing to a direct reference to Tacitus' work in the *Satires* comes in an often-cited passage in *Satire* 2 in which the satirist pretends to tread on the historian's territory. Juvenal is describing an effeminate man preening in a mirror, a tool which, he digresses, was also the “equipment of effeminate Otho ... with which he used to look at himself in his armor, right when he was ordering the standards to be raised.” Such a perversion of military *uirtus* “ought to be noted in new annals and a freshly minted history!” (2.99–103). Many scholars think that Juvenal uses *annales* here simply as a synonym for *historia* and, therefore, that this is a humorous criticism of the mirror-free account of Otho's brief career in the recently published *Histories* (e.g., Townend 1973, 153; Syme 1979; 261–263; Braund 1996, 150). Tacitus does indeed portray Otho as brave and hardy in his last days on campaign, “not in accordance with his reputation” (*Hist.* 2.11.3). The historian is here reacting to an existing *fama* about Otho; Juvenal, in turn, reacts critically to Tacitus' “omission” and undoes his work of trimming rumor away from history. He goes on to package up his own story of Otho, sarcastically presenting him as a unique exemplum for the ages:

nimirum summi ducis est occidere Galbam

et curare cutem, summi constantia cuius

Bebriaci campis solium adfectare Palati

et pressum in faciem digitis extendere panem,

quod nec in Assyrio pharetrata Sameram is orbe

Truly it is the mark of a great general to slay Galba
and take care of one's skin, to aim for the Palatine throne
in the fields of Bebriacum and spread kneaded dough
onto one's face with the fingers, something never done
by quiver-bearing Semiramis in her Assyrian realm,
or Cleopatra despairing in her Actian ship.

We might read the entire Otho passage as an assertion that satiric poetry and historiography have different agendas. Yet Juvenal may also be encouraging us to recognize Tacitus' presence in the *Satires* and to imagine the generic boundaries blurring somewhat. After all, his satire has a historical dimension; moreover, as Juvenal (and his readers) must have recognized, Tacitus *does* pointedly condemn Otho's profligacy and his passions (*Hist.* 2.31.1), not to mention the behavior of other "bad emperors." Tacitus was obviously capable of fierce moral attack and innuendo, both strategies that must have occasionally inspired the satirist. For instance, Juvenal's joke that Nero's stage performances were his greatest crimes (8.221–223) seems inspired by Tacitus' emphasis on these antics in the *Annals* and possibly more particularly by the bitter and dry remark attributed to Subrius Flavus at 15.67.2 ("I began to hate you after you became the murderer of your mother and wife, a charioteer, an actor, and an arsonist"). The Otho passage does not deny that Tacitus was a participant in an "age of satire" – it may just chide the talented historian for abstaining in one instance.

5. The State of Vice

The programmatic fiction that Juvenal presents at the beginning of his first *Satire* can help us understand how the satirist handled the fact of Tacitus' importance in the contemporary literary scene. Juvenal complains that Rome is choked with poets and the air polluted with recitations – and yet his solution is to jump into the fray with his own offering, starting with a competent imitation of his contemporaries' work (Henderson 1999). Similarly, as Juvenal faced the challenge of producing original satire at the end of an era of "satiric" verse and

prose – including “satiric” Tacitean historiography – he chose to respond head on by creating a uniquely “historical” brand of satire.

We can regard Juvenal’s “history” as complementing Tacitus’ in several ways, all of which may be conveniently illustrated with the vignette about Otho’s mirror. Historians certainly select and exclude material as they push their own thematic agendas, and Tacitus is no exception (Ginsburg 1981); thus, in inserting the mirror back into the Otho story, Juvenal seems to highlight and criticize Tacitus’ choices, albeit in jest. Juvenal can also be seen to reduce the version of “history” promoted by Tacitus – which puts the actions of emperors and imperial families, senators, governors, and armies in the foreground – making it seem insignificant or tangential next to his own version, which centers on private and social life. Otho’s cameo in *Satire* 2 suggests, at most, that emperors’ behavior can reflect broader social trends, but not that it influences them. Otho did not *make* himself an example according to Juvenal or even inspire imitation; indeed, in the context of the poem, the vignette suggests that the emperor is just one member of a large club, and one who practiced his vice far away from Rome to boot. Nero has a similar function in *Satire* 8, which attacks immoral scions of noble families. The satirist holds up the stage-struck emperor as one illustration of a prevalent phenomenon and notes that, in his day, Nero forced some nobles to go on stage themselves. He firmly states that Nero cannot be blamed for the phenomenon in later generations (8.193). This emperor, too, is an illustrative case but not a model or culprit for others’ behavior. Finally, in the Otho passage and elsewhere, Juvenal is able to convert historical material that is associated with one theme (for example, civil war) into satiric material that emphasizes another (for example, effeminacy). While Juvenal does often underscore Tacitus’ own themes by borrowing his material, he also reassesses that material, finding new themes that enable a different perspective on events.

We may explore these ideas further by examining the appearance of another emperor in *Satire* 2. Juvenal’s theme in the opening of the poem is the hypocrisy of self-righteous moralists who privately practice the vice of pathic homosexuality. He first condemns such men as a type, without naming significant names, but his generic diatribe gives way to a brutally vivid digression on Domitian, the censor-emperor who allegedly seduced and impregnated his niece, then forced her to undergo a deadly abortion. Juvenal ranks the incestuous censor among the poem’s other hypocrites:

qualis erat nuper tragico pollutus adulter

concubitu, qui tunc leges reuocabat amaras

omnibus atque ipsis Veneri Martique timendas,
cum tot abortiuis fecundam Iulia uuluam
solueret et patruo similes effunderet offas. (2.29–33)

Such a man was the adulterer recently stained with intercourse
of a tragic type – the one who was summoning back harsh laws
that were fearsome to everyone including Venus and Mars
themselves,

while Julia was cleansing her fertile womb with all those
abortion drugs,

and expelling lumps that resembled her uncle.

With that, the satirist shifts back to describing less famous offenders. Does the emperor have a special status in this group – as the “climactic example” (Ramage 1989, 688) – or is he just one of a list? If Domitian’s status as emperor makes him the most significant example of the vice in question and in that sense an *auctor* of the public morals, this is not made clear in the casual lead-in *qualis erat*. Juvenal instead packages the example of Domitian to reflect the overall state of aristocratic morality. Tacitean historiography, in contrast, operates on the principle that under an imperial regime, the acts and intrigues of the emperor, his family, and his associates must monopolize the historian’s attention (cf. *Ann.* 4.33). Such prominent individuals do make useful historical exempla. Juvenal may well have agreed with Tacitus that “few people can discern right things from wrong, the advantageous from the harmful, by means of prudence; most learn from the experiences of others” (*Ann.* 4.33.2). In his satire, however, examples do not have to come from the top. Domitian is of interest in *Satire* 2 because his behavior represents a widespread malady.

We cannot know whether Juvenal’s repulsive description of Julia’s experience aims to corroborate or correct the lost account of Domitian’s reign from Tacitus’ *Histories* (cf. Plin., *Ep.* 4.11.6; Suet., *Dom.* 22). Still, Juvenal’s version clearly advertises satire’s special status as a zone where intimate revelations and obscenity are permitted (Richlin 1992). Ultimately, though, it is not Julia or the imperial family who matter in this poem; Juvenal aims to investigate a set of behaviors that have taken over Rome and the empire itself. The poem goes on to dissolve its own opening theme of hypocrisy and

to target a larger category of homosexuals who do not hide what Juvenal casts as a vice. That is not to say that the example from the imperial household does not play a part in the illustration of Juvenal's final theme. The poem ends with the complaint that the vice in question has spread on the grandest possible scale: that is, to conquered provinces (2.159–170). Here, Juvenal does happen to intersect with Tacitus, who suggests that Roman expansion is responsible for the spread of various forms of degeneracy among formerly tough provincials (*Ger.* 15; *Ag.* 21). Juvenal too imagines that barbarians are softened by Romanization. By expressing his theme through images of reproduction, he plants in the poem a commentary on empire, a satiric counterpart to Tacitus'. The satirist's communication of the basic message is embellished by interesting play with images of fertility and sterility in the poem. Men who marry men may be forbidden by Nature to reproduce together (2.137–142), but they do create a legacy for themselves by spreading their practices through the empire.

Juvenal's imagery also aptly describes a phenomenon of contemporary literature. Domitian, like the poem's later targets, is represented as both literally sterile and metaphorically fertile. He has been able to produce only lifeless copies of himself. These copies nevertheless symbolize *his* legacy – neither a biological heir nor an empire full of hypocritical degenerates, but his own image in the literary record. Tacitus, Pliny, and Suetonius may not have provided their readers with this kind of lurid detail, but they *did* produce numerous similar, and similarly repulsive, “copies” of Domitian – a substitute for the succession that never played out, as Juvenal's vignette reminds us. The image of Julia's abortion – with the imperfect tense making it seem long-lasting – is a striking symbol for the memory of the current generation of writers in the literary world beyond satire.

Satire 2 is inside-out Tacitus, focusing on a widespread trend of which the emperor is just one example. A different kind of inversion comes with *Satire* 4, where Juvenal *does* contribute vigorously to the Domitian-bashing industry of the early second century. This poem seems, at first, to continue the attack on generic vices begun in *Satire* 1. Its initial subject is Juvenal's original “nobody,” Crispinus; the satirist previously targeted him as a prime example of an unfairly rich and ostentatious foreign freedman (1.26–29) and now pretends to reprise his role as an irksome upstart (“Here he comes again,” 4.1). Crispinus is lambasted for purchasing a huge mullet to consume alone (4.15–22) – the kind of small-time offense cited in satiric attacks on luxury and greed (e.g., Juv. 1.135–141; Hor., *Sat.* 2.2; Pers. 2.42–43). This would seem to be an appropriate satiric target for Juvenal; the

filthy-rich Egyptian freedman, though undoubtedly dead by now, is truly a phenomenon of imperial Roman society, an emblem of changing fundamental social values and rules.

Even so, this cipher will take us to an emperor. Woven into the generic attack on his greed are hints of various connections between petty offenses and greater crimes, nobodies and potentates. Crispinus turns out to be a kindred spirit of Domitian's: he is an *adulter* (4.4) like Domitian in *Satire* 2, guilty not of harming a member of his own family but of corrupting a Vestal (4.8–10). This was the sort of crime in which Domitian *qua* censor evidently took an interest – at least, when it came to punishing the Vestal involved (cf. Plin., *Ep.* 4.11.6–10; Suet., *Dom.* 8.3–4), a consequence that Juvenal highlights in the case of Crispinus' escapade (4.10). The satirist goes on to hint at Crispinus' importance when he remarks that normally a man with his extravagant dining habits would have incurred the censor's (i.e., Domitian's) wrath (4.11–14). Our nobody seems to have connections, and we soon learn that he has been placed in the poem to take us to a higher subject:

qualis tunc epulas ipsum gluttisse putamus
induperatorem, cum tot sestertia, partem
exiguam et modicae sumptam de margine cenae,
purpureus magni ructarit scurra Palati? (4.28–31)

What sorts of banquets, then, do we think the emperor himself gobbled down, when so many thousands of sesterces – a paltry portion, from a side-dish of an ordinary-sized dinner –

were belched up by this purple-clad clown of the Palatine?

Crispinus is the “clown of the Palatine,” a member of Domitian's inner circle (although no historical or epigraphical source confirms this claim of Juvenal's). Accordingly, he is here charged with the job of escorting us into the emperor's private space for what Juvenal advertises as a much bigger story (and one that requires him to invoke the Muse of epic; 4.34). Domitian's story also concerns a gigantic fish, a turbot so large that the humble fisherman who has caught it immediately brings it to the emperor as a gift, and indeed so remarkable that an imperial council meeting is called to discuss its proper handling. When Crispinus himself turns up in that very council (4.108–109), the poem's two parts are further unified.

Once again we have a case of parallel offenses, one committed by a generic satiric target and the other by an emperor. The transition from the first topic to the second begins in both cases with a comparison (*quales ... putamus?* 4.28; *qualis erat*, 2.29). In *Satire* 4, however, the subject of Domitian takes over and his lower-status counterpart recedes into the background. Now the poem begins to look something more like contemporary and recent accounts of the emperor, with its blend of critical history and poetic panegyric (Townend 1973, 158–159). Juvenal introduces Domitian as “the final Flavian ... a bald Nero” (4.38), echoing a connection repeatedly made in contemporary literature between these two tyrannical and dynasty-ending emperors (Mart. 11.33; Plin., *Pan.* 53.4; Tac., Ag. 45.2). The Nero connection may also be emphasized in the poem’s final lines, where Juvenal’s complaint that Domitian’s victims had “no avenger” (*uindice nullo*, 152) seems to allude to Nero’s challenger Vindex. As for the narrative of the council meeting concerning the fish, this probably owes something to a lost epic on Domitian’s campaign against the Chatti. The surviving few lines of Statius’ *De Bello Germanico* refer to members of a war council, including one or possibly two who also appear in Juvenal’s poem (Courtney 1993, 360). Much of *Satire* 4 would obviously be better illuminated if we possessed Statius’ entire poem, although it was surely not Juvenal’s only model; there are satiric narratives of council deliberations in the fragments of Lucilius’ first book and in the *Apocolocyntosis*.

The extensive criticisms of Domitian in Tacitus’ early works are echoed in various ways in Juvenal’s poem. In chapters 29 and 37 of the *Germania*, Tacitus condemns the emperor for celebrating conquests that were profitless (cf. Ag. 39.1); a similar criticism may underlie Juvenal’s representation of the fish-centered council meeting as a sort of imperialist strategy session (Winkler 1995). More overtly, Tacitus attacks Domitian in the *Agricola* as a paranoid and vindictive ruler. While most of the work is set on the British frontier, Tacitus takes us briefly into Domitian’s presence to describe his calculated and malicious responses to Agricola’s successes (39–42). In a sense Juvenal’s satire inverts the plan of the *Agricola* to focus on what happens inside Domitian’s council chamber. It has us follow the journey of the turbot from its origin in the Adriatic to Domitian’s Alban court, where we stay for the uncomfortable duration as members of the emperor’s council urgently compete in flattery.

Britain itself, though far away, is mentioned twice: first as a target of Domitian’s desire for expansion and pacification (4.126–127) and then as a source of luxury items (specifically oysters, 4.140–142) that are enjoyed by aristocratic gourmands in Rome. It is worth noting here that in the rhetorical high point of the *Agricola*, the British rebel

leader Calgacus condemns the Romans, the “plunderers of the world” (*raptores orbis*, Ag. 30.4), for (among other things) harvesting the sea after they have exhausted the land in their conquered territories. Although *Satire* 4 figures Domitian as the monster who “savaged the half-dead world” (*semianimum laceraret ... orbem*, 4.37), it also makes room for broader criticism of all the manifestations of Roman imperialism, as in the digression on luxury and consumption cited above. Juvenal brings the theme of the outsider Calgacus’ speech home, directing it at the emperor’s Alban palace. The satirist seems to be providing a complementary account to the *Agricola*, its missing other side. He tells the story of Roman expansion and of Domitian’s noxious effect, not from the point of view of faraway Britain but from the oppressive inner sanctum of the Alban court.

Many details of the council meeting itself recall the Domitian of the *Agricola*. Like Tacitus, Juvenal calls the emperor’s Alban residence the *arx Albana* (4.145; cf. Ag. 45.1). He stresses that Domitian hated the flatterers with whom he surrounded himself (4.73; Ag. 39, 42) and who in turn betrayed their fear with facial *pallor* (4.74–75; cf. Ag. 45.2). Yet their flattery genuinely arouses the emperor, in whom great power and constant flattery cultivated great naïveté (4.70–71; Ag. 43.4). The names and natures of the eleven counselors described in the *Satire* evoke passages in Tacitus. Q. Vibius Crispus, a man with principles but also an instinct for self-preservation, lived to the age of eighty because he “never raised his arms against the current” (4.89–90). This man, who operated in a similar fashion under Nero, is mentioned in Tacitus’ *Histories* as ranking “among the pre-eminent ... rather than among the good” (2.10). Juvenal’s portrait of Crispus is consonant with Tacitus’ icy characterization, if (ironically) less satirically indirect. There may also be an oblique but critical allusion to another “survivor” in Tacitus: *Agricola* himself. Tacitus makes clear that his father-in-law chose to deflect Domitian’s suspicion and hostility by performing, albeit minimally, the modesty and flattery that was expected when he seemed poised to rise higher (Ag. 42.3), but he goes on to characterize *Agricola* as a great man who served a bad emperor (42.4). Similarly, Juvenal’s digression on the case of Crispus indicts the emperor who would not tolerate “honest counsel” (4.85–86), but in its larger context – a whole catalogue of survivors (Jones 2007, 87–88) – it also mounts a case against the men who chose the cautious path (Elomaa 2009, 74–75). The argument made gradually throughout Juvenal’s catalogue casts a shadow on Tacitus’ eulogy.

There are other echoes. Juvenal criticizes council member Cornelius Fuscus, who “designed battles in a marbled villa” and later led Roman soldiers to their deaths in Dacia (4.111–112). This man is

not named in the *Agricola*, but in that work Tacitus does condemn some Roman commanders for the losses they incurred, including some on the Dacian frontier (41). Juvenal also introduces L. Valerius Catullus Messalinus, the literally blind flatterer who opines elaborately on the appropriate handling of the turbot (4.119–121). In the *Agricola*, too, we see Catullus droning on in a council meeting in the very same setting (45.1). Both works also end with gestures to the later events. Tacitus sums up the political oppression of Domitian's later years and the victims that period claimed, expressing relief that his deceased father-in-law was spared such terrible sights (45.1–2). Juvenal too expands his picture, contrasting the “trifles” on which his poem has focused (*nugis*, 4.150) with the real damage this emperor did to the Roman nobility. The characterization of the fish story as *nugae* acknowledges a difference between Juvenal's genre and contemporary critical accounts of Domitian.

Yet Juvenal's self-effacing (or satire-effacing) comment about *nugae* is balanced by the drama of its delivery; ironically, this is the gravest moment of the poem. The satirist calls Domitian's reign “that time of savagery” (cf. *Ag.* 1.4; *Suet., Dom.* 10.1), an era that “robbed Rome of brilliant and noble lives” and left Domitian himself “dripping from the slaughter of [the consul] Lamia and his kind” (4.150–155). This language goes beyond previous descriptions in the poem in its straightforward condemnation of the last Flavian. At the very moment when satire is ostensibly being distinguished from historical writing, it is being dignified with history's grander scope after all, and it rises to the task with a serious moral tone. This serious turn continues in the last two lines. Juvenal takes an even longer view than Tacitus does in his climactic chapter, all the way to Domitian's assassination, which happened because “he had begun to be fearsome to the workers” (4.153–154). This is Juvenal's way of pointing to the fact that the successful conspiracy was planned by persons of low status (cf. *Suet., Dom.* 14–17); he contrasts them with Domitian's senatorial victims. This pointed contrast evokes, in a way that does not flatter Tacitus, the same chapter of the *Agricola* that surveys Domitian's later offenses. Tacitus acknowledges the inaction and effective complicity of “us” senators: “our hands dragged Helvidius into prison; the look of Mauricius and Rusticus shamed us; Senecio drenched us in his innocent blood” (45.1). Juvenal's similar descriptions of Domitian's victims suggest that the satirist is taking Tacitus' admission of guilt and using it to drive home a point of his own – that cowardice allowed this tyrannical “big fish” to grow to such destructive proportions when it lived.

This poem is a unique experiment. No other work by Juvenal (or his satiric predecessors) gives so much attention to an emperor, his

court, his policies, or his legacy. Indeed, immediately after this *Satire*, Juvenal re-focuses on the morality of private citizens, replacing the Domitian of *Satire* 4 with a more conventional villain. The wealthy Virro of *Satire* 5, who serves his clients a meal insultingly inferior to his own, brings us back to the generic topic of the selfish patron (cf. *Sat.* 1) and more generally to the ills of Roman society. At the same time, Domitian has left a legacy of sorts here. Virro's tense dinner party, where fear and policing keep the clients under control, is not unlike the imperial council meeting on the prodigious turbot. *Satire* 5 even seems to pick up on Juvenal's suggestion in the earlier poem that Domitian "gobbled down [huge] banquets" (4.28), a remark that turns out to be an inaccurate preamble to the story of the delivery of the fish. We never see Domitian consume the fish (nor does history remember him as a gourmand), but we do watch Virro being served a stream of sumptuous dishes that he withholds from his clients. In this interesting sequence of poems, Juvenal appears to invent a new satiric fiction that is inspired by a monster of historical memory.

What of the substance and possible origins of the fiction about Domitian's fish? Juvenal's intriguing description of the turbot suggests another metaphor for Domitian's image in history, analogous to the *offae* ("lumps") in *Satire* 2. In some ways Juvenal represents the emperor as a double of the fish. Both enter the intimate and claustrophobic council chamber simultaneously, and both cause wonder and alarm. Domitian has a metaphorical "crest" like the fish's real one; he falls for flattery just as the fish readily entered the net; he tortures the world (*orbem*, 4.37) as the fish threatens to overwhelm any dish (*orbem*, 4.132) into which it is forced (Winkler 1995, 74–76). The analogy lurks even in the beginning of the narrative, when Juvenal likens this Adriatic turbot to huge specimens in the cold sea of Azov; fattened by long torpor, these fish are liberated by the sun and swim south (4.41–44). Like the fish that the sun's warmth unleashes on the world, an image of a monstrous Domitian liberated by the duly burning rage of authors now fills the pages of Roman historical writing, shocking readers even in death. Tacitus and his contemporaries have fattened this fish. Although Juvenal may not have thought any better of Domitian, he does note that when big fish are concerned, people tend to "make big out to be bigger" (4.17). It is no wonder that, in this age, to tell even a nugatory tale about Domitian would require divine assistance.

6. Exemplarity from History to Satire

In many of his later poems, Juvenal disposes of historical exempla and explores broader themes common in satire's ancestor moral diatribe: dining and luxury, friendship and flattery, ambition and self-control. Historical anecdotes do return, however, in another unique *Satire* – perhaps the most famous of the later poems. *Satire* 10 examines the disappointments and tragedies that can result from human ambitions. Scrutinizing the most common prayers – for political power, military might, long life, physical beauty – Juvenal exposes each one as misguided, pointing to suitable exempla from history and myth. The former rhetoric student gives us his most authentic declamatory performance here. The poem is strikingly well organized and focused, and the figures whose unhappy stories are cited (Demosthenes, Cicero, Hannibal, Alexander the Great, kings from the Trojan War) also populated the school exercises of the first century CE.

The two imperial episodes that bookend Juvenal's series of exempla are also prominent in Tacitus' *Annals*. The satirist begins his catalogue by holding up Aelius Sejanus as an example of risky political ambition (10.58–113) and concludes by pointing to Gaius Silius as a case of ill-fated beauty (10.329–345). These conspicuous accounts pay special homage to Tacitus as an interpreter of imperial history and particularly engage the reader who is familiar with the *Annals* (even modern readers who are hampered by our possession of a damaged text). In the Sejanus passage Juvenal actually delays the announcement of the man's name until after he has doled out a series of significant clues that should remind the learned reader of the *Annals*:

quosdam praecipitat subiecta potentia magnae
inuidiae, mergit longa atque insignis honorum
pagina. descendunt statuae restemque secuntur,
ipsas deinde rotas bigarum inpacta securis
caedit et inmeritis franguntur crura caballis.
iam strident ignes, iam follibus atque caminis
ardet adoratum populo caput et crepat ingens
Seianus, deinde ex facie toto orbe secunda
fiunt urceoli, pelues, sartago, matellae. (10.56–64)

Some men are thrown down by their power that has

become subject to envy; they are sunk by their long and distinguished record of offices. Statues fall, following the rope; then the axe dashes against even the chariot wheels and cuts them down, and the legs of the guiltless nags are smashed. Now the flames hiss, now amid the bellows and furnace, that head that was the darling of the people burns and crackles, the great Sejanus; and then from that face, second in the whole world, are produced little pitchers, basins, saucepans, and chamber-pots.

This teasing introduction rolls out key images and ideas from Tacitus' account of Sejanus. Like Tacitus at *Annals* 4.1.1, Juvenal makes *potentia* and its consequences the central theme of Sejanus' story. He also highlights Sejanus' susceptibility to *invidia* (cf. *Ann.* 4.40–41) and his long list of honors that included public statues (*Ann.* 3.72.3, 4.2.3, 4.74.2). Juvenal invites the reader to guess who this ill-fated figure is, as if self-consciously styling his account as post-Tacitean.

While Tacitus begins Sejanus' story at the beginning, introducing the man's character and background in an ominously elaborate way, yet withholding specific reference to his ultimate fate, for Juvenal the story is over and its meaning predetermined. This perspective emphasizes that authors' interpretations have a significant role in shaping the legacy of historical figures. It makes sense for Juvenal to describe the fallen praetorian prefect as a spectacle meant to be looked at (*spectandus*, 10.67). Sejanus' fate has converted him into a moral exemplum destined for reuse in declamation, historiography, and even satire – much like Juvenal's Hannibal who, a bit later in the poem, walks into his fate “so as to become a declamation” (10.167). Appropriately, the satirist focuses on the aftermath of Sejanus' death, when the people competed with each other to “run quickly and ... kick [the body of] Caesar's enemy” (10.85–88) and thus advertise their hostility to the man. Overall, Juvenal strongly evokes Tacitus' text as distinct from the events themselves. The bystander who asks how Sejanus met his end is told “a wordy and weighty letter came from Capreae,” and responds “fine; I ask no more” (10.71–72) – almost as if he had read Tacitus' memorable portrait of Tiberius as a writer of calculated, damaging, and even satirical letters (Morello 2006).

At the same time, Juvenal pushes some ideas further than Tacitus

does. His digression on the popular reaction to Sejanus' fall includes the famous remark that the common people's interests have narrowed to "bread and circuses" since the end of the popular elections (10.81). The satirist's account is actually more complex and conflicted than this quip implies. It jumbles together a spectrum of imagined popular attitudes to politics (caution, fear, apathy, suspicion; see Keane 2006, 36–37) and so makes a better case for integrating the story of the *populus* into imperial history than Tacitus had. On the subject of Sejanus himself, Juvenal has his anonymous bystander begin with pointed questions about the circumstances of the man's sudden fall: "Under what charge did he fall? Who was the informer? What evidence and witnesses made the case?" (*quo cecidit sub crimine? quisnam/delator, quibus indicibus, quo teste probavit?* 10.69–70). This man might seem to have been trained by Tacitus, whose *Annals* give a woeful account of the proliferation of dubious treason charges and executions under Tiberius. Although the satirist's bystander is quickly silenced and apparently satisfied, his questions are as piercing in their own way as those of Sejanus' frightened young daughter, who, Tacitus reports, begged her captors to tell her "for what wrongdoing, and to where, she was being dragged off" (*quod ob delictum, quo traheretur*, *Ann.* 5.9.3) before meeting her fate of rape and execution. Both Juvenal and Tacitus let the questions be asked; both indicate that the answers given or implied are unsatisfactory. The satirist may be going further, however, and asking why Sejanus had to become an exemplum at all.

Juvenal also laces his account with a humor that is fundamentally lacking in Tacitus'. The humor indicates that we are in the midst of a satiric version of history, while simultaneously creating discomfort for the reader – since the episode in question is particularly unpleasant. The device that accomplishes both ends is the description of Sejanus' statues – a detail that again echoes Tacitus. Juvenal pushes the theme further, giving even more emphasis to the statues than to the man. His narrative of the destruction of honorific statues may seem perfectly appropriate in satire, a genre that metaphorically dismantles facades (cf. Horace's description of Lucilian satire at *Sat.* 2.1.64–65). Yet Juvenal tops this metaphorical tradition by using the statues to dramatize the exposure, punishment, and public rejection of Sejanus himself. The laying low of chariots and horses, the encroachment of flames, and the enveloping of the head with fire and smoke all suggest the process of entrapment and revenge narrated in the *Annals*. Through this economical account, satire does its work. With the dominant image of damaged statuary, Juvenal blurs, in an unsettling way, the line between inanimate objects and flesh-and-blood man. When Juvenal finally gives Sejanus' name (10.63), it is in a sentence

where the grammatical subject and the object of desecration sounds more like a man than a statue. This is the same instant at which the satirist “rewards” the perceptive reader of the *Annals* for having guessed the subject before this point, but that reward is accompanied by troubling innuendo. We can soon relax into the realization that Juvenal is describing a statue and enjoy the famous deflating summary of a splendid statue’s fate, namely conversion into “pitchers, basins, saucepans, and chamber-pots.” Then, some lines later, the satirist thrusts us back into a darker reality, reminding us with his next use of Sejanus’ name that the man’s body actually *was* desecrated: “Sejanus is being dragged along by the hook for show, all are rejoicing. ‘What lips, what a face the man had!’” (10.66–68). In the pertinent lost portion of *Annals* 5, Tacitus may have provided a narrative of this spectacle, but it is not likely that he forced the reader to observe it so closely.

What of the emperor in this story? Tiberius, unlike his counterparts in the earlier *Satires*, is not conjured specifically to illustrate the moral theme. Instead, he is an invisible (if predictable) influence on Sejanus’ fate, much as he is absent from Rome in the corresponding section of the *Annals* (Ramage 1989, 673). Juvenal also alludes to his termination of the popular elections. In these ways the satirist can keep the focus on public morality, whether it is represented by the weak and conflicted masses or the overly ambitious exemplum himself. Evidently, an emperor need not make any more of an appearance in a satiric “declamation” about a man who defied an emperor.

The same is not quite true for a man who, according to the satirist, rather unwillingly ran afoul of an emperor. Gaius Silius, the matching Tacitean bookend to Sejanus in *Satire* 10, is a different example of fatal power (cf. *potentia et exitium*, *Ann.* 11.5.3). In Juvenal’s poem he represents the double-edged boon of great beauty; he is, in fact, the crowning item in a list of examples from myth and history. His introduction may be compared to Sejanus’, in which the name is withheld for seven lines; in this case, though, Juvenal never names Silius at all. He does not need to: he has held him up as “the one Caesar’s wife decides to marry” (10.330–331), a label that tells us exactly what story we are entering if we have read our Tacitus. An additional clue comes instantly in the epithet “most handsome” (*formosissimus*, 10.331; cf. *iuventutis Romanae pulcherrimum*, *Ann.* 11.12.1, and *formae*, 11.28.1).

At first the emperor Claudius seems to be virtually absent from this account. More central to Juvenal’s story is *Caesaris uxor*, Messalina, whose will determines Silius’ fate in this version. In this detail Juvenal deviates from Tacitus. The historian begins by noting that once Silius

had attracted Messalina's attention, he was doomed ("should he refuse, he would face certain death," *Ann.* 11.12.2), but as matters progress, Silius becomes the instigator of the marriage plot. Tacitus explores Messalina's thought process and final compliance under pressure (*segniter*, 11.26.3). Juvenal, in contrast, turns Tacitus' initial scenario into the whole story (Lawall 1958, 26). He places Messalina, in bridal clothes, at the site of the wedding, waiting for the lawful union she has demanded (*non nisi legitime uolt nubere*, 10.338; cf. *Ann.* 11.26.4, "she craved the name of wife"). Then he turns his attention to the dilemma of the passive Silius, inventing a *suasoria* exercise like those he performed as a student: "pick what course [Silius] should be persuaded to follow" (10.329–330). Even so, Juvenal implies that such a speech would be futile. Silius is doomed (*extinguendus*), a passive victim of his own beauty and the fierce will of the empress, who "seizes" (or "rapes") him with her desiring eyes (*rapitur ... Messalinae oculis*, 10.332–333).

In making Messalina his villain, Juvenal actually allows the figure of Claudius to become more visible in this story than Tiberius is in the much longer Sejanus passage, for the same capricious fortune that made Silius handsome and vulnerable also made Claudius weak and oblivious, the one who "will be last to know about the disgrace of his house" (10.342). While Juvenal's main point is that the long deception will make revenge swifter, along the way we glimpse Claudius in a sympathetic light himself, as a fellow victim of Messalina. Silius may be caught between Messalina's pressure and the threat of punishment from the emperor, with only the option of choosing to live a few more days by going through with the marriage, but the way Juvenal wraps up the story reminds us that even Claudius has been subject, in a sense, to Messalina's *imperium* (10.343).

The end result is that this story functions in more ways than meet the eye – appropriately for the last exemplum in Juvenal's enormous poem. In the last line there is even an opportunity for us to think of other individuals who came up against deadly *imperium* – such as Sejanus in the first story – and whose "fine white neck[s] had to be offered to the sword" (10.345). Although this last line strictly applies to Silius, the dilemma described here also recalls Messalina herself after her exposure in Tacitus' suspenseful account of her flight and hesitation to surrender to death (*Ann.* 11.37). More loosely, it even reminds us of Claudius himself, succumbing to his most formidable enemy – his next and last wife, Agrippina the Younger. Juvenal's parting line reads like a hint to all the characters involved in the episode. All of them are doomed one way or another, due to their beauty, vice, or weakness, and ultimately in every case to their powerlessness against fate. The episode ties the bigger themes of the

poem together. Perhaps this is why Juvenal chose this bizarre story – one Tacitus pretends to be embarrassed even to relate (*Ann.* 11.27) – to cap his long catalogue. If he sensed any genuine anxiety on the historian’s part about the propriety of a story of foolish lust and astonishing carelessness, this did not keep Juvenal from canonizing the Silius episode by giving it a prominent spot in his monumental poem.

7. Conclusion

Viewed within the entire corpus of Juvenal’s *Satires*, all these examples of engagement with Tacitus and imperial history do not suggest a major career-long agenda of dialogue with the historian. Nevertheless, Juvenal clearly reuses ideas and details of Tacitus’ historical writings. This is not a simple conversion of material to fit a preexisting generic template, nor does it represent a triumph of the “age of satire” over history. Rather, it is a creative, dynamic reinvention of satire itself, an exploitation of Tacitus’ vaguely satiric qualities that explores further possibilities for the verse genre. We can conceive the process through one more metaphor embedded in the *Satires*, in one of the “Tacitean” parts of *Satire* 10. When Sejanus’ statues are recycled into pitchers and pots – objects that in Juvenal represent the shabby everyday life of Rome (3.203, 277) – we are treated to a brief but vivid dramatization of the dynamic processes of influence and appropriation. The essence of the Tacitean Sejanus lived on in Juvenal, and, though adapted to its new use, it changed the look of Roman satire itself.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Braund (1996) is a good place to start for an assessment of Juvenal’s early poems and their allusions to contemporary literature and politics. Braund (1988) remains the only substantial study of Juvenal’s third book (*Satires* 7–9) as a literary and rhetorical unit, and although its scholarship is much more detailed, it is inspired in part by the essays on satiric rhetoric collected in Anderson (1982). For analysis of satiric techniques on the microscopic level, Schmitz (2000) and Plaza (2006) are recommended. Juvenal’s literary borrowings and reconfiguration of satire within literary tradition is the subject of Jones (2007). Townend (1973) is concerned with literary influences on Juvenal at different points of his career. On reflections of the

political and literary environment during the composition of the *Satires*, see Ramage (1989), Hardie (1990), and Hardie (1997–1998) (the latter two studies focusing on *Satires* 4 and 7). A chapter on Juvenal's conception of satiric free speech and political engagement can be found in Freudenburg (2001).

On correspondences between Juvenal and Tacitus, see the essays of Williams (2010) and Nappa (2010), which appeared just before the present volume went into production; they pose similar questions and examine some of the same passages as this essay, but with unique results. Among earlier treatments, Bartsch (1994) offers a subtle and interesting chapter comparing the literary “doublespeak” in *Satire* 7 and the *Dialogue on Orators*. The value of Juvenal and Tacitus as documenters of Domitian's rule is considered in Wilson (2003). The satirist and the historian naturally feature in Hutchinson's (1993) more comprehensive characterization of the literary period from Nero to Hadrian. Shumate (2006) considers ideology in particular, examining how Juvenal and Tacitus, among others, express the anxieties of the Roman elite in a changing empire and create precedents for later authors. Finally, although Griffin (1994) does not focus exclusively on classical authors, it contains an illuminating chapter on the theory and practice of satire's intersection with history.

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PART V: Theoretical Approaches

21

Masculinity and Gender Performance in Tacitus

Thomas Späth

We are in the spring of the year 69 CE. Control over Rome is fiercely contested: after the forced suicide of the emperor Nero in June 68, Galba succeeds him as *princeps* and is killed just six months later. From January 15, 69, Marcus Salvius Otho is *princeps* of the Roman empire, but his rule is not secure: Aulus Vitellius advances against him with his troops. One day in April of the year 69, the *princeps* Otho waits in Brixellum for news of the battle that his troops are waging against those of the usurper Vitellius near the village of Bedriacum in Northern Italy. He awaits the message, as Tacitus writes, without hurry and “secure in his decision” (*consilii certus*). According to those fleeing from the struggle, who are the first to confirm the rumors, “the cause was lost” (*profugi e proelio perditas res patefaciunt*, *Hist.* 2.46.1). Although his soldiers assert their combat readiness to their general, Otho cannot be swayed in his decision; he replies that it would be too high a price for his own life if he exposed their fighting spirit and bravery to further hazards. His death would be even more beautiful, the greater their expression of hope for his survival (*Hist.* 2.47.1). In this farewell speech Tacitus has the general underscore his desire to be an *exemplum*, that is to say, a shining example that posterity shall judge – Otho, it seems, is certain of the verdict: “Others may have held rule longer, no one will have relinquished it so bravely” (*alii diutius imperium tenuerint, nemo tam fortiter reliquerit*, *Hist.* 2.47.2). Otho, intent on suicide, distinguishes himself in the hours before his death by *constantia* and *destinatio*, by the fortitude of his decision. He convinces his juniors with his reputation (*auctoritas*), his seniors with

his requests (*preces*). Otho presents the latter with a calm demeanor and in firm words (*placidus ore, intrepidus verbis*). He distributes gifts of money sparingly and not as if he were about to die (*Hist.* 2.47.3–48.1). Otho admonishes his nephew, Salvius Cocceianus, to tackle life with renewed courage (*uitam capesseret erecto animo*); Salvius, moreover, should neither forget him as an uncle nor remember him too vividly. Since Otho recalls that he was the first – after the Julians, the Claudians, and the Sulpicii – to have asserted the imperial rule of his family the Salvii, he has bestowed enough dignity upon his family’s name and upon his descendants (*satis sibi nominis, satis posteris suis nobilitas quaesitum*, *Hist.* 2.48.2). Otho dismisses everyone and retires to rest, when a riot of unruly soldiers is reported: the rioters threaten to kill those seeking to leave the camp. The general rebukes the instigators of the mutiny and ensures that those pulling out of the mutiny remain unscathed. Then he retires, drinks some water, and checks the sharpness of the two daggers brought to him; he places one of the blades under his pillow. He spends a quiet night and is even said to have slept; at dawn the following morning, he plunges his breast onto the dagger. His body is burned and buried hastily: Otho has requested this burial procedure to prevent his head being cut off and subjected to indignities (*Hist.* 2.49.1–3).

In this passage Tacitus skillfully designs a self-elected and honorable death for a figure whose youth was previously the subject of quite derogatory epithets: we learn that Otho had spent his childhood “lackadaisically” (*incuriose*), his youth “riotously” (*petulanter*) (*Hist.* 1.13.3; cf. *Ann.* 13.45.4–46.1; 14.46.3). Here, however, he is described in a manner befitting the *exitus illustrium uirorum*, the collections of the exemplary deaths of famous men.¹ This description of an exemplary death comprises attributes that indicate the qualities of an outstanding general. As I argue below, Tacitus here postulates an exemplary masculinity.

When I refer to “masculinity” or “femininity,” I mean the historical problematization of “gender” that Joan Scott described a quarter of a century ago as a “useful category of historical research” and whose benefit remains indisputable.² “Gender” thus does not describe men and women, but instead refers to the “multiple and contradictory meanings attributed to sexual difference” (Scott 1988a, 25). The notions of femininity and masculinity therefore form a “reservoir” of meanings, of which not only the subjects acting in historical reality avail themselves but also the ancient author shaping his male and female characters. Based thereupon, I posit that the Tacitean texts demonstrate the performance of gender.³ The characters in Tacitus’ historical narrative consist of an array of gender differences carrying female and male connotations, which, moreover, intersect with the

characters' socio-political position and legal status. In turn, this gives rise to a diversity of gender identities, which Tacitus manifoldly develops and shapes in his works: soldiers are thus different kinds of men than their commanders or than stage actors. Equally, the female identity of the *matrona* married to a senator differs radically from that of a craftsman's wife, of a freedwoman, or indeed of a female slave.

In what follows, I explain and review the above claim in three steps. I first compare Otho's suicide to the death of his successor Vitellius and compare the two generals' conduct to their soldiers'. This juxtaposition reveals that no consistent masculinity exists among Tacitus' characters. As the second section shows, however, analyzing these historical narratives points to a normative presentation of gender. Outlining the social meanings of masculinity and femininity, such performance is inscribed in the characters – by “inscribe” I refer to the fact that what authors can write (the “scriptible,” according to Barthes 1970, 10) is determined by their socio-historical situation (Späth 2006, 62–66). These characters are as such by no means “ideal types” in terms of a sociologically constructed model that would simply embody gender norms. Third, I consider in greater detail various actors within Tacitus' historiographical representation. Combining elements of femininity and masculinity, these actors correspond to and defy normative expression. In so doing they illustrate the wide range of possible sexual identities resulting from the combination and intersection of gender norms with social status, the legal status of freedom, kinship position, and situation-specific action. Even if this allows us to clearly recognize the performative work of the author, who constructs the masculinity and femininity of his characters so as to overlap with other socially specific attributes, in a fourth step we need to ask how freely a historiographer can shape his actors in terms of gender. From exploring this question in the historiographical text, in closing I consider the fundamental problem residing in the *historical* reading of the historical narrative: analyzing historical texts necessarily reaches beyond the single text in a quest to explore past social reality. How far does the textual performance of gender allow us to grasp the practices of gender performance in Roman society at the time of Tacitus?

1. Vitellius as a Contrastive Foil and the Questionable Masculinity of Roman Soldiers

Otho's death, halfway through the second book of the *Histories*, concludes a first narrative strand that begins with the assassination of his predecessor Galba halfway through the first book. Thereafter follows Tacitus' account of Vitellius' reign (which lasted slightly less than eight months); the third book ends with the death of the third usurper within one and the same year (on the structure of the *Histories*, cf. Ash 2009, 88–89). The two *principes* dominate the first three books of the *Histories*, and comparing the two death scenes is instructive: the demise of Otho's successor Vitellius reveals a narrative construction of masculinity that contrasts, in an astonishingly consistent way, the adversary's ignominy with the positively valued attributes of the heroically staged death of the ruler. Whereas Otho is characterized by his concern for the fate of his soldiers, as expressed in his farewell speech, Vitellius is marked by his inability to strengthen his soldiers' resolve; he appears neither before the army nor before the people, but instead hides out in his garden (*Hist.* 3.36.1–2). Otho's frugality contrasts with Vitellius' obsession with luxury (*Hist.* 3.36.1, 55.2); the contented remark that Otho had helped establish the honor of his name and thus also of his descendants is set against Vitellius' "forgetting" of the past, present, and future (*Hist.* 3.36.1); and the latter's anxiety is opposed to the former's courage (*Hist.* 3.37.1, 56.2). In what amounts to an actual list of negative attributes, Vitellius' incompetence in military leadership (*ignarus militiae*) is followed by the fact that he was "unable to make decisions" (*improvidus consilii*) and therefore consulted others about each strategic move (*alios rogans*, *Hist.* 3.56.2). A few lines before, his arrival at his army's camp, to which he sets out only "at the urging of the army" (*flagrante exercitu*), is described: he enters the camp "of uncertain mind and dependent on untrustworthy advice" (*incertus animi et infidis consiliis obnoxius*, *Hist.* 3.55.3; cf. 3.36.2). Thus, Vitellius contrasts negatively with Otho's "steadfastness" (*constantia*). Whereas the latter drinks water on the eve of his suicide, Vitellius is *temulentus*: he gets drunk in a threatening situation (*Hist.* 3.56.2). Finally, Tacitus opposes Otho's provident ordering of his hasty burial, designed to forestall the desecration of his body, to the "indignity of the death" (*deformitas exitus*) suffered by Vitellius, whose dead body the "mob taunted with the same depravity with which it had flattered the living Vitellius" (*Hist.* 3.85).

These two death scenes reveal a pattern of Roman masculinity that Tacitus presents by contrasting Otho and Vitellius as positive and negative examples of the *principes*, which reaches as far as their verbatim correspondence (cf. *Hist.* 2.46.1 and 3.56.2: *consilii certus* vs. *incertus animi*, or *nequaquam trepidus* in 2.46.1 vs. *uoltu et incessu trepidus* in 3.55.3). But this seemingly simple formulation of the

importance of masculinity, as reflected in the contrast between norm compliance and norm violation, gains complexity when set alongside the normative expectation about the soldiers serving under the two generals. Consistent with the exemplary qualities of Otho as general and as *princeps*, good soldiers are indeed prepared to die while doing their duty (*Hist.* 2.44.3, 47.3; 3.84.3). While Otho recognizes their *uirtus* (*Hist.* 2.47.1), this masculine “virtue” has a different substance than the *uirtus* of a military commander: whereas Otho’s independent decision-making capacity is highlighted, and whereas Vitellius’ dependence on the advice of third parties is criticized, exemplary soldiers are defined by the sequence of words “submission, love of obedience, virtue” (*obsequium, parendi amor, uirtus*, *Hist.* 2.19.2; cf. 2.37.1). A second, fundamental difference as regards the meaning of *uirtus* for the individual aristocrat on the one hand and for the soldiers under his command on the other is that the latter’s actions need not be governed by moderation and self-restraint: diametrically opposed stand the distinctive traits of an excellent soldier, namely, “untamed boldness” (*ferocitas*, cf. *Hist.* 2.24.2, 43.1, 45.2) and “cruelty” (*atrocitas*, *Hist.* 2.32.1; cf. Kaplan 1979, 411 and n. 5); these qualities, Tacitus continues, should be motivated by “anger, rage, and instinct” (*ira, furor, and instinctus*, *Hist.* 2.44.3, 46.1).

The above depictions of the soldiers and of the deaths of Otho and Vitellius in the *Histories* raise a basic question: what is *masculinity* in the Tacitean text? If Otho is supposed to be the exemplary man, and Vitellius his contrastive counterpart, are then the soldiers with their *furor* not men? Gender, I argue, cannot be grasped that simply in Tacitus: the soldiers’ positively valued qualities of cruelty and anger are opposed just as much to Otho’s quiet and exemplary serenity in his suicide as they are to Vitellius’ indecisive anxiety. But the figures imagined and staged by Tacitus, senator and historian, within the scope of his perception and the concepts available to him to explain and classify the perceived phenomena are all men. His discursive conditionality, moreover, undeniably includes all the social representations of masculinity and femininity.⁴

2. Gender in the *Annals*

Reading the *Annals*, we are confronted with a multitude of male and a much smaller but nevertheless substantial number of female characters, all of whom the author deploys as active agents in a historical narrative spanning the death of Augustus to the end of the Julio-Claudian imperial house under Nero. The narrative action almost

always goes hand in hand with an assessment founded on its conformity with or violation of social norms. I argue that a gender-specific reading can take advantage of these Tacitean judgments: the systematic analysis of the characters' actions (Späth 1994) discloses the elements constituting the normative patterns of masculinity and femininity, which in turn shape representation.

Normative Masculinity

The defining characteristics of masculinity in Tacitus prove to be very simple representations of *active dominance*: this dominance is *active* because the male standard specifies that a man is a subject and thus the starting point for his actions; herein lies the fundamental meaning of *dominance*, which signifies self-determination and therefore excludes both heteronomous action and subordination to another person. In Tacitus, this male dominance finds its exemplary expression in the figure of the – aristocratic – *pater familias*, that is to say, the culturally defined image of the “father of the family,” who has little in common with our modern understanding of the “father.” To begin with, the *father* is the oldest living agnate of a Roman *domus*, which he embodies to the world outside. I favor the concept of the *domus* over that of the “family,” since the latter suggests a mistaken affinity between modern and ancient concepts of the family (cf. Saller 1994, whose *domus*-concept should be understood less as a “nuclear family” than as a “houseful,” in contrast to “household,” as suggested by Wallace-Hadrill 1991, 214; for a fundamental discussion, see Thomas 1986). To this *domus* belong the lines of tradition extending from the ancestors to the descendants; an ideal-typical Roman man has to fulfill the expectation of either maintaining or increasing the position of honor acquired by his ancestors and of passing this on to his offspring. Second, the *pater* exerts his male dominance through the legal power he has over the people and over the material proprietorship of the *domus*; in much the same way, he assumes a hierarchically superior position as *dominus* (the master of slaves) and as *patronus* (the senior party in the relationships with clients and freedmen). Third, no time limit exists for *patria potestas*, the legal authority of the Roman *pater*: only upon the death of the *pater* can his sons become *patres* and achieve an independent legal status *sui iuris*, “in their own right.” Fourth, the position of a *pater* is a social status assigned under applicable law; a Roman man holds this status even if he is not married and has no children.

These features of the *pater familias* are not explicated in the Tacitean text but instead they are taken for granted. Textual analysis, however, reveals how the image of male dominance, as rooted in the

pater familias, is implemented in three kinds of relationships: this dominance is expressed in the control, care, and exploitation exercised by the *patres* in dealing with their dependants. On the one hand, the area of *control* includes the protection and preservation of one's political and social position – and this encompasses one's own *domus* and the social recognition it enjoys owing to the tradition of ancestral deeds; on the other, it involves the exertion of power over the hierarchically subordinate. From this point of view, male action therefore expresses a concern for descendancy, be it through the adoption of sons or through the birth of legitimate children; as a form of *social birth* this gender discourse actually focuses on the actions of the father, who accepts the exertion of the *patria potestas* and who is responsible for passing on his family name (cf. Köves-Zulauf 1990, 1–92; Corbier 2001, 53–58). *Patres* convey the social prestige of their *domus* to their subordinates – especially their offspring, but also their clients. They expand this prestige by securing friendships either through their own shrewd marriages or through the marriages of their daughters and sons. They also are responsible for the actions of those depending on their legal power. In court cases fathers are thus usually implicated in the charges brought against their sons and vice versa; a court ruling or verdict delivered against a father is also delivered against his son (cf. *Ann.* 4.13.3, 44.3; 5.9.1–2; 6.9.3; 16.29.2). Dependants are considered, as it were, a constituent part of the superordinated male position, as belonging inseparably, as a single entity, to that person from whom dependency emanates. In Otho's farewell speech mentioned above the statements about his success in increasing his family's prestige and the words he addresses to his nephew perfectly illustrate this normative standard of masculinity, which results from deconstructing the text of the *Annals*.

The masculine standard of *control* has yet another dimension: if a *pater* confers prestige upon his offspring or uses it for the benefit of his clients, this at once amounts to a form of assistance that designates *care* as a normative expectation about male behavior. Conveying social reputation by the family name forms part of the conceptual and material assistance lent to the socio-political careers of male offspring. But this also holds true for the women subordinate to the father's legal authority, since the prestige of their *pater* enhances their opportunities of securing a socially viable marriage and thereby bolsters not only the female's social standing as the daughter or wife of a respected man but also the scope of action and influence associated therewith (Späth 1994, 225–227).

The third area of activity is the *exploitation* of subordinates. I apply the term in the neutral sense of “use,” rather than in its modern sense, which carries negative connotations of “abuse”: a systematic reading

of the *Annals* shows as an inevitable male norm that a *pater familias* chooses his wife out of socio-political considerations, both to secure friendship relations with another *domus* and to sire legitimate children to secure the continuity of his own *domus*. The wife is therefore an instrument of male activity, and she can be replaced with frequent divorces and remarriages (Corbier 1991; Treggiari 1991). The marriages of daughters and sons serve the same function; they create connections among fathers-in-law and between sons-in-law and fathers-in-law. *Patres* also include their sons in their own actions, assigning them military or political tasks (*Ann.* 3.21.4, 74.2; 15.28.2) so that they are indeed used as “instruments” – such as Drusus or Germanicus, whom Tiberius sent in his place to placate mutinous troops (*Ann.* 1.24–26, 31–49). However, such delegation also affords them the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their military and political prowess.

The downside of such male dominance over another person is the dominance over one’s own self. *Self-control* occurs in Tacitus’ texts as a prerequisite for exercising power over others. As observed, the juxtaposition between Otho and Vitellius in the *Histories* illustrates this normative expectation. In the *Annals* it is largely present in a negative way: the inability to control one’s own impulses is a defining element, especially in the critical images of the *principes* drawn by Tacitus. In his palace on Capri, where he retired in 27 CE, Tiberius is thus “devoted to luxury and wicked idleness” (*in luxus et malum otium resolutus*, *Ann.* 4.67.3). In the threatening situation when his wife Messalina entered into a marriage with the consul designate C. Silius, Claudius cannot even restrain himself from indulging in a meal and in the pleasure of wine, which “warms” him and softens him toward his wife (*Ann.* 11.37.2). Nero stands out by his greed for wealth (*Ann.* 16.1–3), as well as more generally by his overindulgence in excessive luxury, which Tacitus illustrates with what he describes as an exemplary depiction of a Neronian banquet (*Ann.* 15.37.1–4). These instances are significant transgressions of a model of masculinity based on dominance – not only toward others but also as regards one’s ability to control one’s own desires and pleasures. Tacitus makes plain that these desires are based on wealth, luxury, and power, as well as sexual relations: sexuality in the Tacitean text is not a separate, autonomous precinct that differs qualitatively from other pleasures (Foucault 1984, 9–19; Halperin, Winkler, and Zeitlin 1990, 3–20). Just as the use of gastronomic pleasures, so sexual practices are incorporated into a hierarchical concept of control: to be male is to preserve a superior position of dominance (Skinner 2005, 192–211). In a sexual relationship this means taking an “active” position in the Roman sense, that is, to be given or receive pleasure, in contrast to a

“passive” position, which involves giving pleasure to another.⁵ Therefore, the *Annals* also contain a range of invectives – a rhetorical tradition going back to the Republican period, for which Cicero offers a wealth of examples (Meyer-Zwiffelhofer 1995, 24–48; Meister 2010, 39–80) – that castigate male characters with the widespread accusation of being *muliebriter* (“like a female”), that is, for allowing oneself to be used in a sexually passive way (*Ann.* 6.4.5; 11.2.1, 36.4; 13.20.2; 15.37.4, 49.4). In the gender discourse of the *Annals*, this is only one particular form of violating a male norm, which consists in expecting oneself to control one’s own emotions and desires.

The model of masculinity outlined here (the social position of the aristocratic *pater familias*; the fields of actions of control, care, and exploitation; and the capacity for self-regulation) can be construed by textual analysis (in the etymological sense of the word, the *de*-composition of the text). Even if this model determines the shaping of Tacitean characters, there is barely a character in either the *Historiae* or the *Annals* who represents such fully-fledged masculinity in a positive sense. By contrast, should not the *Agricola*, Tacitus’ biography of his father-in-law, provide the image of the ideal man?

Ideal Agricola?

While scholars disagree whether the *Agricola* of Tacitus is a biography, history, *laudatio funebris*, or *encomium* (Saint-Denis 1942, v–xv; Dihle 1987, 27–32; Vielberg 1987, 27; Marincola 1999, 320–322; Rutledge 2009, 436), and indeed whether the question of genre matters greatly (Ash 2007, 434), there is a broad consensus that the figure of Agricola epitomizes an exemplary purpose (Harrison 2007, 314–317). Tacitus’ *Agricola* reveals the image of an energetic, active man – and this effect of the narrative can be demonstrated by lexical analysis. Such analysis is indispensable if we do not content ourselves with a reading confined to working out the meanings on the surface of the narrative; we cannot limit ourselves to merely reading the narrative surface, because masculinity – our object of investigation – is not an explicit issue in the text, but inscribed therein. To grasp the deeper levels of the text, we must undertake an *analytical* reading – a reading that literally breaks down the text into the levels of its production of meaning (Späth 2006, 62–66). Such textual analysis requires a purely formal criterion, for example, a study of the *Agricola* that would only cover those verbs whose grammatical subject or object is the protagonist of the narrative. Such a reading reveals that Agricola is referred to as the logical subject for over two-thirds of the three hundred verbs occurring in the text. The character thus appears most evidently as the starting point for his actions; if our analysis includes

the semantic range of these verbs, then his actions amount essentially to an exercising of power. Tacitus portrays Agricola as a man who exerts power in equal measure over external objects and himself: on the one hand over subjugated persons, soldiers and military personnel, political opponents and friends, and family members; on the other hand over himself and through his devotion to duty, self-restraint, perseverance in the pursuit of goals, and a mastery of emotions. One case in point is the description of Agricola's reaction to the death of his one-year-old son: "a calamity which he endured not, as do most of the brave men (*plerique fortium uirorum*), with the emotion suppressed ostentatiously (*ambitiose*) nor, on the other hand with womanish tears and grief (*per lamenta rursus ac maerorem muliebriter*); in his sorrow he found war to be his source of relief" (Ag. 29.1).

In this stylized image, while Tacitus exposes to some extent a pattern of artificial masculinity that unites the normative expectations mentioned in the previous section, Agricola becomes further differentiated in various passages where the smooth surface of an idealized masculinity is tarnished. At the beginning of his political career, and in stark contrast to Tacitus' observed tendency to emphasize his protagonist's dynamism, Agricola had allowed "the year between his quaestorship and tribunate, as well as the year of the tribunate itself, to pass in retirement and inaction, because he knew those times of Nero when indolence stood for wisdom" (Ag. 6.3). A little later, his duties as commander of the XX Legion in Britain under the legate Vettius Bolanus (69–71) are characterized as follows: "Agricola moderated his energy (*uis*) and restrained his ardor (*ardor*), that he might not grow too important, for he had learnt to obey (*peritus obsequi*) and understood well how to combine expediency with moral goodness" (Ag. 8.1). Clearly contradicting an established male norm, namely, one which excludes submission to the power of another, Agricola's obedience toward the commander Q. Petil(l)ius Cerialis is portrayed as *uirtus*, "masculine virtue" (Ag. 8.3; cf. 39.1). The final chapters of the biography emphasize his prudent self-restraint and his emanation of a perfect "power over himself." However, such power does now not appear as a prerequisite for having "power over others." On his return from Britain to Rome, Agricola chose to arrive under the cover of darkness to avoid any attention (Ag. 40.3). Moreover, he subsequently rejected entirely any claim to his military glory, which among the *otiosi* (those employed in neither military nor official matters) would be only a burden; instead, he devoted himself to retirement and leisure (Ag. 40.4).

These passages illustrate that Agricola knows how to refrain from ideal-typical masculinity norms. He persists in inactivity instead of proving masculine activity. He demonstrates *obsequium*, which can be

understood either as “compliance” or as “obedience,” instead of assuming the masculine position of dominance. Such adaptability leads to the most frequently cited and annotated sentence in the *Agricola*, in which Tacitus sets himself apart from those who acquire fame “through a death that is ambitious and useless to the *res publica*” (Ag. 42.3–4). If, however, an exemplary character does not consistently demonstrate the attributes of masculinity and if even its flexible renunciation is portrayed as worthy of emulation, this observation urges us to be cautious: it seems that between the category of masculinity and the shaping of male characters in the Tacitean texts there exists no simple relationship between a norm and its simple implementation in practice. Rather, masculinity adapts to political and social conditions; masculinity proves to be a category that is not isolated, but necessarily interrelated with other categories of the aristocratic lifestyle. Thus, the above analysis reveals a first aspect of a *performance* of masculinity, whose importance becomes even more evidently tangible if compared to the concepts of femininity deducible from the *Annals*.

Patterns of Femininity

Femininity is defined in the *Annals* not as a prescriptive standard but as a descriptive definition: every female figure is ascribed femininity as an inherent feature. While masculinity must be earned through the active exercise of a dominant position, femininity is “innate.” In a reversal of Simone de Beauvoir’s famous dictum, “One is not born a woman but becomes one” (Beauvoir 1949 Vol. 2, 15), the ancient Roman idea of gender could be formulated thus: in Rome, one is not born a man but becomes one. For the notion of femininity, the opposite holds true: the *Annals* describe female figures as a *sex* (and as a *gender* produced by *sex*), characterized by forms of behavior that the text justifies by the fact that they are exhibited by women. Women are often denoted in the *Annals* as a collective by the word *sexus*, and the qualifying adjectives attached to the Latin word for sex can be “weak,” “sickly,” “unwarlike-cowardly” (*imbecillus*, *inualidus*, *imbellis*).⁶ Thus, the establishment of a female essence is by no means neutral: this femininity is connoted negatively, as expressed by the word *muliebris* (the adjective for *mulier*, “a woman of marriageable age,” which is used consistently pejoratively, especially to accuse a man of *mollitia*, “softness,” and to suggest passive sexual practices). For it is above all a fundamental defect that distinguishes this “female sex” in the *Annals*, namely, *muliebris impotentia*, “female excess,” the inability to control one’s own impulses.⁷

This becomes apparent in *Annals* 3.33–34, where Tacitus reports a

Senate meeting in the year 21. The meeting debated the proposal of A. Severus Caecina to forbid magistrates the company of their wives in the provinces. According to Tacitus, Caecina justified his request by asserting that women would hinder the management of peaceful administration with their extravagance (*luxus*), as well as obstruct wartime duties with their anxiety, since “not only is the sex feeble and unequal to hardship, but, when it has liberty, is spiteful, intriguing, and greedy of power” (*non imbecillum tantum et impar laboribus sexum, sed, si licentia adsit, saeuum, ambitiosum, potestatis auuidum*, *Ann.* 3.33.3). Interestingly, the objection placed in the mouth of M. Valerius Messalla Messalinus uses the same arguments about femininity; acceptance of the proposal would leave “the sex, weak by nature (*sexus natura inualidus*), alone and at the mercy of its own voluptuousness and the passions of others. Even with the husband’s personal vigilance, the marriage is scarcely preserved inviolate. What would happen were it for a number of years to be forgotten, just as in a divorce?” (*Ann.* 3.34.5). Messalla challenges the petitioner by urging him not to cover up the cowardly negligence of men, for “it is the husband’s fault if the wife transgresses propriety” (*uiri in eo culpam, si femina modum excedat*, *Ann.* 3.34.4).

What seems to me remarkable about this “Senate debate” is that the positions of both Caecina and Messalla, despite being opposite numbers, are grounded in exactly the same notion of femininity. Most interestingly, Tacitus adopts stereotypes behind which one suspects rhetorical *topoi*, such as those already found in Livy. In what are practically verbatim parallels, the Tacitean account follows the debate in Livy (34.1–8), in which M. Porcius Cato and L. Valerius battle over the *lex Oppia*, a law restricting the show of wealth by women in the Second Punic War (Ginsburg 1993, 88–96; Späth 1994, 61, 78; Woodman and Martin 1996, 298; Santoro L’Hoir 2006, 118–124; see also Erler and Ungern-Sternberg 1987). In Roman discourse, femininity seems to be defined by the inability for (rational) self-control, and is expressed by the propensity toward luxury and extravagance, sexual insatiability, and the constant urge to compete with others (*aemulatio*). By adopting this stereotype in the *Annals*, Tacitus suggests that women, “because of their nature,” are perceived as a threat to the prevailing order. In line with the conceptual appropriateness of this gender discourse, such femininity in turn affirms the importance of male self-control both as the guarantor of order and as a means of maintaining control over women (who are subordinate to male legal authority). What can be seen in the *Annals* of these basic normative expectations about feminine behavior is a response to male norms: female action conforming to normative expectations is subordination. Two aspects of female action and its

contents are described in the *Annals*: first, the fulfillment of the instrumental role that women are assigned; and second, their integration into the group of a *domus*, with a corresponding “show of solidarity” with the members of this group.

The first aspect is addressed in the passages mentioning the fidelity of married women (with all the associated properties of the wife who “bids for relaxation,” the confidant, the “companion in all situations,” cf. *Ann.* 12.5.3) and their fertility: the standard faithful and childbearing wife also emerges as the opposite of the much more frequent references to adulterous activities (*Ann.* 1.53.3; 2.50.3; 4.3.3, 42.3, 44.3, 52.1; 6.29.4, 47.2–48.4; 11.1.1; 12.25.1; 13.41.3, 44.1–5; 15.68.3). Combined therewith is the function of female characters as transferrers of social status: wives pass on the social standing of their fathers to their husbands, and mothers transmit the prestige of their husbands or fathers to their sons and daughters. Along the spectrum of the actions of female characters, the second aspect includes support, affection, or respect for male or female objects of action; such actions are deemed proper in the text if the relationship between the parties is based either on kinship or on male alliances. The representation of standard female behavior can therefore be seen in the mother’s support for her son or daughter, in the wife’s for her husband, in the grandmother’s or mother-in-law’s for their grandchildren or daughters-in-law, in the measured affection of sisters for their brothers, or in the respect of daughters for their mother and father. The positive assessment of this female “show of solidarity” finds its limits not only in an expansion of the *social* framework beyond kinship or friendship circles, but also in exceeding a specific *operational* frame. Clear examples of transgressive support are the efforts of Caesar’s wives (for instance, Livia and Agrippina the Younger) to secure succession for their sons; such endeavors are interpreted as machinations, as is the participation of wives in the duties of the generals (*Ann.* 1.69.1; 2.55.6).

Thus in the *Annals* standard femininity is identified in terms of a threefold classification: the scope of action for the female characters is determined by the social context of the *domus*, by the restriction to spheres of action belonging neither to institutional policy nor to military affairs, and by such action being defined as “reactive.” If the male norms require “action in and of itself,” then femininity is characterized by “action in relation to” others. Appropriately regulated male action is the impulse for a chain of action; considered a link in this chain of action, female action constitutes a response to this impulse.

As outlined, the Tacitean texts display a dichotomous gender difference: the norms of female subordination and “reactivity” are

opposed to those of masculine dominance and active engagement. However, this dichotomy is not based on reciprocity; masculinity is not given but must be acquired, in particular through self-control as a condition of dominance over others. Femininity, by contrast, is “bestowed by nature” and indicates an inability to exercise self-control. It follows that the opposite of the male standard does not indicate femininity. Three terms of a complex “dichotomy” contrasting the masculine with the feminine thus come into view. As regards masculinity, however, this dichotomy involves the norms of manliness on the one hand, while the transgression of these norms does not signify femininity on the other hand, but instead unmanliness. There again, there can be no “unfemininity” because femininity is considered essential: transgressions of femininity point to the acquisition of male values. What the above analysis of the Tacitean texts thus produces are three central notions: masculinity, unmanliness, and femininity. Nevertheless classified in the hierarchical opposition of masculinity and femininity, this triad thereby provides us with a vocabulary of power.

3. Disruptions of the Gender Dichotomy

Although this gender discourse sets the stage for the Tacitean representation of history and serves the author to pass judgment on his male and female characters, each character placed on that stage and forming part of the Tacitean representation of history shows that these standards are not fully complied with. Phrased differently, the male and female actors appearing in the historical narrative implement partial and selected gender-specific norms, and thereby blend aspects of masculinity and femininity with other aspects of social existence. Thus they are examples of a shaping of identity that current terminology describes as *intersectional performance*. Such performance manifests itself at the narrative level in the descriptions of the (female and male) actors’ actions, which in turn expresses their implementation (or indeed realization) of gender-specific patterns. These differences result from Tacitus’ arranging (or indeed staging) of his characters by linking their gender-specific actions with their social and legal status, and also by assigning them the argumentative and narrative functions for which he intends to use them in his presentation of history. From these elements is composed the intersectional gender construction of Tacitean characters (and I employ the notion of *intersectionality* in the broader sense – beyond the

triad of “race, class, gender” – explained in Purtschert and Meyer 2010).

On the one hand, we can observe the blurring of the clear contours of dichotomous gender roles in the representation of groups of male characters, whose actions are determined by their status; on the other, such blurring becomes evident in the production of individual male and female characters, whose transgression of gender-specific norms is considered either positive or negative.

Status and Gender

Soldiers – as discussed briefly (Section 1) – appear in Tacitus almost exclusively as a collective.⁸ It is precisely not active dominance, which is considered the basis of masculinity, that they are required to exhibit, as suggested by the above passages in the *Historiae*, and also in their representations in the *Agricola* and the *Annals*. Rather, the obvious behavior expected of soldiers is *amor obsequii*, the “love of obedience” (*Ann.* 1.28.5; Tacitus also uses the phrase *mos obsequii*, the “habit of obedience,” *Ann.* 1.19.3) – in other words, compliance and subordination, which are, as observed, fundamental characteristics of femininity. But soldiers must be exhorted to subordinate themselves through military *disciplina*. To maintain military discipline, Roman soldiers were subject to physical punishment. Thus, the centurion is identified with the vine staff (*uitis*), with which he can beat the soldiers (*Ann.* 1.23.3). Soldiers are an exception among the free Roman citizens, whose bodily integrity is guaranteed by law and who are exempt from corporal punishment (cf. Walters 1997, 40 on the *leges Porciae de prouocatione* of 195 BCE). When, after the news of the death of Augustus, the leader of the Pannonian legions allowed “usual business” to be suspended, and thereby relaxed the strict order of the army camp, “the soldiers let go” (*lasciuire miles*) and thereafter aspired only to prodigality and idleness and “wished no more to know about discipline and effort”: this is the starting point for a mutiny (*Ann.* 1.16.2). Soldiers are thus incapable of self-restraint; a thirst for booty and a greed for money are *topoi* hardly ever absent from Tacitus’ references to soldiers. However, this lack of restraint, in contrast to *muliebris impotentia*, is nowhere accounted for in terms of a soldierly *nature*. Consequently, *atrocitas* and *ferocitas*, the uncontrolled outbreak of male brutality characterizing Roman soldiers (as mentioned above with reference to Kaplan 1979) can amount to a positive assessment in a military context.

Not only soldiers suggest that male norms are closely related to social status, which in turn determines which gender-specific elements

(masculine, unmanly, or feminine) are incorporated into character depiction. Another example is male characters occupying the position of sons. In the *Annals* Tacitus ascribes barely autonomous action to sons in relation to their fathers – with the significant exceptions of Drusus and Germanicus, the sons of Tiberius (*Ann.* 3.37.2; 6.51.3; cf. Pelling 1993; Späth 1994, 153–155; Kraus 2009, 107–114); another example is the son of M. Calpurnius Piso. The sons’ actions, positively valued and simultaneously directed against their fathers, correspond to paternal characters situated outside the good social and political order. Yet it is crucial that Tiberius’ and Piso’s sons are ultimately subordinate to their fathers’ power. Although Piso’s son Marcus gave his father a piece of advice that the latter rejected, he participated in the war preparations against his better judgment (*Ann.* 2.76.2–3, 78.2; cf. Damon and Takács 1999; Griffin 2009, 177–180). In the trial against Piso, Tiberius pleaded for the acquittal of the son, since the latter had participated in the civil war only in obedience to his father’s orders, “and his son could not refuse” (*nec potuisse filium detrectare*, *Ann.* 3.17.1). In contradiction to the idea of a male norm that excludes submission to any other person, respectful obedience to their fathers thus applies inevitably to sons.

Due to their social and legal status, neither sons nor soldiers can realize the norm of male active dominance. The same applies to other positions, and it would be interesting to systematically explore the gender-specific configuration of freedmen, slaves, actors, or members of the equestrian order (but this lies beyond the scope of this chapter). Beyond this socio-structurally conditioned challenge of the masculinity model, practically every single character stands for a play on masculine, and also on feminine, norms.

Narrative Gender Performance

Agricola, Tacitus’ father-in-law, provides the *exemplum* for a “great man under bad emperors.” As shown (Section 2), Agricola knew how to renounce the implementation of active male dominance under the political and military conditions requiring such conduct: *obsequium* to the governors of Britain is attributed to him as a virtue in his capacity as legion commander. *Obsequium ac modestia*, “obedience and humility,” as evident in the much-discussed passage *Agricola* 42.4, were displayed generally as the qualities of “great men” who must prove themselves under “bad emperors.” Modesty refers to the manly ability of male self-restraint and subordination to the female pattern, which here contrasts with *industria ac uigor*, “persistence and energy.” But Agricola renounced even this “persistent energy” under the principate of Nero, because he understood that “inertia stood for

wisdom” (*inertia pro sapientia*, Ag. 6.3). Inactivity is not a female but an unmanly standard; in the gender-specific configuration of characters described above, not every transgression of the image of masculinity approximates femininity.

Unmanly inactivity is mentioned variously in the Tacitean texts. It attains its argumentative assessment in the historical narrative only by way of context. It occurs, as observed, in the characterization of Vitellius: “slack and inactive,” he spends his time in his gardens; and as Tacitus adds, “like sluggish animals that are torpid when they are fed” (*Hist.* 3.36.1–2). Thus, Agricola’s “wise inertia” contrasts with an unambiguously negative assessment of Vitellius, in that Tacitus develops his portrait of Vitellius through combining such adverse traits with other transgressions of manly norms, with the inability (and its feminine connotations) to curb the desire for merrymaking (*Hist.* 3.36.1, 55.2), with the unmanly “blunt” and “fickle mind” (*socors animus*, *Hist.* 3.36.2; *mobilitas ingenii*, *Hist.* 3.84.4), which hinders Vitellius from making decisions (*improvidus consilii*, 3.56.2). This gives rise to his dependence on the counsel of third parties, a form of conduct that stands opposed to the claim of masculine, active dominance (*Hist.* 3.55.3, 56.2). Conversely, Tacitus presents in the *Annals* the character of the senator Thrasea Paetus – and his deliberate choice of inactivity – as an example of an honorable stance against the ruling *princeps* Nero. Thrasea leaves the Senate when, in the year 59, Nero composes votes of thanksgiving for the murder of Agrippina the Younger; to justify her removal Nero presents his mother as a threat to the *res publica* and decrees thanksgivings, the installation of games, and that Agrippina’s birthday was an unfortunate day (*Ann.* 14.12.1). Thrasea is not present at the regular ordering of vows for the emperor’s welfare, although he is a member of the college of priests (the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*). While as a former consul of 57 he belongs to the highest circle among the senators, for three years he no longer takes his place at the meetings of the Senate; such at least are the allegations of his accuser Cossutianus Capito (*Ann.* 16.22.1–2). His renunciation of active occupation comes with no further transgressions. The portrait of Thrasea instead serves as an example of manly virtue, which he is said to embody (*virtus ipsa*, *Ann.* 16.21.1). He even accepts the hints to his imminent death *immoto animo*, “with an unwavering spirit.” To the young man who delivers his death sentence from the Senate, he shows his severed arteries, from which blood flows, admonishing the messenger to look closely, since he has been born into times when strength must be drawn from examples of steadfastness (*Ann.* 15.23.4).

Not only male characters are staged within a wide-ranging composition of manly, unmanly, and feminine components, but female

characters also exhibit this narrative performance of gender within the text. The best-known and most often discussed character in this respect is Agrippina the Elder, whom Tacitus calls “a woman great for her courage” (*femina ingens animi*, *Ann.* 1.69.1; cf. Santoro L’Hoir 2006, 136–139). The historical narrative introduces her as the wife of Germanicus, with reference to her ancestry and her fertility: “In the meantime, while Germanicus, as I have related, was collecting the taxes of Gaul, he received news of the death of Augustus. He was married to the granddaughter of Augustus, Agrippina, by whom he had several children” (*Ann.* 1.33.1). Tacitus mentions the popularity of Germanicus among the Roman people (here for once not referred to as *uulgus* or *plebs*, but *populus Romanus*, *Ann.* 1.33.2), on which are based Tiberius’ and Livia’s “hidden feelings of hatred” against him. He then invokes the “womanish resentment incited by the stepmotherly impetus” of Livia against Agrippina (*muliebres offensiones nouercalibus Liuiæ in Agrippinam stimulis*, *Ann.* 1.33.3). But Tacitus also adds that Agrippina herself would have been too impassioned if she had not through chastity and love of her husband turned her untamed character to good (*Ann.* 1.33.3: ... *atque ipsa Agrippina paulo commotior, nisi quod castitate et mariti amore quamuis indomitum animum in bonum uertebat*; cf. Santoro L’Hoir 2006, 80). In shaping the character of Agrippina, Tacitus thus from the outset refers to the positive masculine element of ancestry; to the feminine element of childbearing fertility in her function as a wife; and to the traits necessarily associated with the portrait of femininity, impulsiveness, and an untamed nature. To these traits, he opposes Agrippina’s capability to exercise self-restraint (which recalls male virtue) by the femininely connoted expectations of *castitas* and *mariti amor*. Agrippina is thus presented as an exception, because she attains this mastery on her own account and does not need her husband to make her “not exceed the limit.”

The different facets of Agrippina the Elder characterize her overall representation in the *Annals*. In the obituary of her death in the year 33, this tension is presented in summary: on the one hand, notes Tacitus, Agrippina “was with her masculine aspirations far removed from the frailties of women” (*uirilibus curis feminarum uitia exuerat*, *Ann.* 6.25.2); on the other, he refers both to her inability “to tolerate a modest position” and to her “lust for rule” (*aequi impatiens, dominandi auida*).⁹ In the *Annals* Agrippina the Elder is a woman of *pudicitia impenetrabilis*, “impenetrable chastity” (*Ann.* 4.12.2), while she is also associated with *atrocitas* and *ferocia*, “cruelty” and “savagery” (*Ann.* 2.72.1; 4.52.2). After the death of her husband Germanicus she is “wracked by grief and unaware as to how to bear it” (*uiolenta luctu et nescia tolerandi*, *Ann.* 3.1.1); she is described as “overly proud in her

fertility” (*superba fecunditate*, *Ann.* 4.12.3). Her father-in-law Tiberius chastises her “arrogant speech” and “stubborn mind” (*adrogantia oris* and *contumax animus*, *Ann.* 5.3.2). Within the semantic field defined by these characterizations, the above description *femina ingens animi* certainly fits, but it also sounds an ambiguous note. The *magnitude* of the woman, which is based on her courage and strength of character, results from her ability to control her passions on her own. *Muliebris impotentia*, “feminine excess,” is nevertheless very clearly attributed to the character of Agrippina. Agrippina the Elder therefore appears as one of the female characters in the *Annals* who are able to pursue with rational, male means a goal dictated by feminine excesses. The historical narrative presents this topical construction of a female character in a reference to Agrippina the Younger, daughter of Agrippina the Elder and mother of Nero, in a concise formula: “Agrippina, who bestowed rule upon her son, was incapable of enduring his rule” (*Agrippina, quae filio dare imperium, tolerare imperitantem nequibat*, *Ann.* 12.64.3). In such a context even *pudicitia* may be assessed ambivalently if it is shown as a useful, calculating tool rather than merely as the fulfillment of an obligation to the husband, the father, or indeed the *domus*. If female characters (such as Agrippina the Elder here, or the comparable construction of Agrippina the Younger or Poppaea Sabina in the *Annals*) are endowed with different elements carrying masculine and feminine connotations of the gender discourse, and if this gives rise to a contradiction between *self-controlled* action and the model of the woman determined by her *nature*, then the text resolves this contradiction by attributing rationality only to “tactical” conduct, not to the “strategic” motives and objectives of female action.

Again, female and male elements are variously evident in the construction of a female character whom Victoria Pagán has called “one of the most fascinating characters of the *Annales*” (Pagán 2004, 76, 78–83; 2000, 364–366). Epicharis is indeed an exception because, as a freed person and a woman, she is presented as an exemplary character in contrast to the dishonorable behavior “of free-born, men, Roman knights and senators” (*ingenui et uiri et equites Romani senatoresque*, *Ann.* 15.57). In the account of the preparations for the so-called “Pisonian conspiracy” against Nero in 65, “a certain Epicharis” is introduced, “for whom there was never any care for honest deeds before” (*Epicharis quaedam ... neque illi ante ulla rerum honestarum cura fuerat*, *Ann.* 15.51.1). As a former slave she does not belong among free-born Roman women, who would have been characterized by chaste modesty, *pudicitia*. Epicharis, however, is highlighted as a character taking action in a male fashion. She is also foregrounded for reproaching the conspirators for their hesitation and

vacillation between hope and fear, and we observe her using her love affair with the commander of the fleet of Misenum, the *nauarchus* Volusius Proculus, to win over the fleet for the conspiracy. However, Epicharis divulges no names of the conspirators so that Proculus, who informs Nero of the conversation, “could easily be silenced (by her) because of the lack of witnesses” (*Ann.* 15.51.3–4). And yet she is nevertheless taken into custody and detained. A little later two of the conspirators, senators Flavius Scaevinus and Antonius Natalis, are arrested on the accusation of a freedman of Scaevinus. The freedman Milichus is said to have a *seruilis animus*, a “slavish mind,” which makes him think only of the reward for the betrayal of his patron; he also confers with his wife, who gives him “the advice of a woman – and therefore all the worse” (*consilium muliebre ac deterius*, *Ann.* 15.54.4). The two arrested conspirators are unable to endure the sight of the torture instruments and the corresponding threats: Natalis betrays both Piso as well as Seneca, and when Scaevinus learns of the confession of Natalis, his *imbecillitas*, “weakness,” leads him to betray all the others (*Ann.* 15.56.1–3).

These statements set the stage for endowing Epicharis with her exemplary attitude. First, the *imbecillitas* of the senator Scaevinus recalls the general description of women as *imbecillus et impar laboribus sexus* (*Ann.* 3.33.3; once again it is important to distinguish between weakness as an *essential disposition* of women, as confirmed by *sexus natura inualidus* at 3.34.5, and the character flaw of men, as mentioned at 3.34.5). Second, Milichus, a freed *man*, is characterized by unmanly *seruilis animus* (referring to his status as a former slave). Third, in relation to the wife of Milichus, we come across the general statement claiming the stereotypical assertion about women, *consilium muliebre ac deterius*: if a woman offers counsel, it can only be bad.

There seems to be a blatant contradiction between this finding and the character of Epicharis, not that this disturbs the ancient author (or his audience); gender stereotypes can apparently be set without any difficulty alongside characters refuting the prevailing stereotypes. For Epicharis, whom Nero remembers after the confessions of the two senators and whom he commands to be torn asunder in the torture chamber (*tormentis dilacerari*), on the assumption that a woman’s body cannot endure pain, withstands the beating, the red-hot iron plates, and the greater fury of the torturers, who are loathe to back down before a woman (*Ann.* 15.57.1); Epicharis, in response, denies all accusations. When on the second day she is placed on a sedan chair because she can no longer stand upright with her dislocated limbs, she ties her breast band into a loop at the back of the chair and hangs herself with her entire body weight; “all the nobler was the example set by a freed woman at such a distress in screening strangers and

those whom she hardly knew" (*clarior exemplo libertina mulier in tanta necessitate alienos ac prope ignotos protegendo*, Ann. 15.57.2), while freeborn men spared from torture betrayed their next of kin.

Tacitus' depiction of Epicharis is an example not just of what he considers one kind of exemplary behavior "among bad *principes*," but – from a gender-specific perspective – also an example of the varied construction of gender identity. Based on her social status, the freedwoman cannot fulfill the standard of femininity, *pudicitia*, to which Agrippina the Elder conversely corresponds in an exemplary fashion and which she deploys with rational calculation. Both female characters violate the normative expectations of femininity in so far as they act independently in a manly way. They reverse the rules of power practices, which confer upon Agrippina the name *femina ingens* and upon Epicharis the initial triumph over her accuser Proculus, whom she "silences"; she also triumphs over her torturers, whose male power fails against her opposition, and whom she escapes through her exemplary suicide (Epicharis is thus aligned with the narrative *topos* of femininity running through western literature from Antigone to modernity: female characters become heroines through their deaths). The female characters discussed here differ from the two masculine ones singled out, who in turn break the masculine norm of independent action. As observed, Agricola under the reign of Nero chose inactivity "as the wise way," and Thrasea Paetus provocatively withdrew from political action. Tacitus uses the different evaluations of the two characters to depict through their unmanly inaction the situation of power: neither can exercise his masculinity as dominance. Male steadfastness in the face of death, however, connects Thrasea Paetus and Epicharis; this also recalls Otho's suicide, as discussed at the beginning of this essay.

What I have sought to show with only a few examples could be investigated throughout the entire cast of Tacitean actors. The image drawn of the characters in action results from a play on gender norms. What this image reveals in the first instance is the author's narrative sphere of action, his area of maneuver. Tacitus' account creates a historical reality accessible to us today. Historical analysis, however, cannot restrict itself to the text, but needs to face the question of a reality beyond the text. Thus, the relationship between the narrative performance of gender in the texts and the capacity for maneuver, the *agency* of the historical persons in the performative design of their gender identity, becomes a problem.

4. Narrative and Extratextual Performance of Gender

The above examples of male and female characters make clear that the shaping of gender-specific characters in the Tacitean texts amounts to no simple implementation of normative femininity and masculinity. These normative regulations do indeed exist and they can be worked out by means of a textual analysis that separates these elements from their narrative context and arranges them in a series of enunciations. Such analysis gives rise to the various claims about the rules of gender discourse inscribed in the text, as noted in Section 2. There are no reasons for doubting the existence of this discourse beyond the text: Tacitus does not want to write about masculinity and femininity, and therefore he does not use his narrative to “invent” gender definitions; rather he draws his ideas and those of his audience (which remains “virtual” during the writing process) from existing social representations. To endow specific individual characters with their own necessary identities for his historical narrative, the historian Tacitus therefore uses the “culturally available symbols” and “normative concepts” (Scott 1988b, 43 f.) from which his era constructs gender. Character identity is determined by gender as well as by social and legal status; it consists of various intersecting elements of femininity and masculinity, which in turn are connected with various other elements, such as kinship position, status of freedom, and socio-political position. For this reason the historiographical narrative turns out to be a social authority (along with many others), one that is coined through gender discourse and at the same time shapes that discourse in the (narrative) performance of gender identities. Further, this gender-specific shaping of characters expresses power relations, because power in Roman society is thought to reside in the relationship between dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity.

By investigating a host of examples – Otho, Vitellius, and their soldiers; the social position of sons; the characters of Agricola, Thrasea Paetus, Agrippina the Elder, and Epicharis – I have attempted to show how differently gender identities are constructed in the Tacitean texts. Again this construction also explains the position of individuals or groups in a social hierarchy of power: the (feminine) *obsequium* of soldiers determines their position relative to the (masculine) dominant general; the (masculine) ability of Epicharis to control herself in the face of torture affords her a position of strength over and against the unsuccessful torturers (who, in unmanly ways, are not able to curb their anger); with (manly) stability Agrippina assumes a position that

allows the historian to portray her as a threat to the dominant position of the general. Is this simply a playing with gender norms, which the author cultivates as he writes? We cannot draw direct inferences from the text to historical reality – the sheer contradictions in the narrative itself speak against this. But I would argue that such a narrative performance of gender is inconceivable without a reality beyond the text: Roman men and women have at their disposal room for maneuver, which allows them to variously actualize the elements of femininity and masculinity. This scope for action is not unlimited – neither a slave nor a soldier, neither an aristocratic *matrona* nor a senator, nor indeed a *princeps*, can implement or violate just any gender norms. And yet some scope of action for negotiating gender-specific action must have existed in actual Roman life, because only therein can the *narrative* performance explored here actually be grounded as a possibility both imagined and narrated.¹⁰

NOTES

1. In Plin., *Ep.* 8.12.4, such a collection of “death scenes of famous men” is ascribed to a Titinius Capito; cf. Ronconi (1940, 1966), Schunck (1955), Brescia (2001); for a discussion of the *exitus* scenes and intertextual references in Tacitus, see Marx (1937), Bellardi (1974), Guttilla (1972–1973); Fabbri (1978–1979), by contrast, has argued against intertextuality. On the death scenes in Tacitus – without reference to literary patterns – see Keitel (2009, esp. 138–141).
2. I refer to the seminal essay by Scott (1988a); the author herself has since been critical of the concept of gender (cf. Scott 1999, 2001a, 2001b), but for reasons which for me have little to do with the theoretical relevance of the concept for a politics of history, cf. Schmitt Pantel and Späth (2007); cf. also Scott (2010).
3. Reading Tacitean texts we are of course dealing with *narrative* performance: in his historical narrative Tacitus stages his characters and assigns them, through their described actions and conduct, an identity along a spectrum of gender representations. Although such performance within the narrative is intimately related to language, I use the term *performance* in a broader sense than the purely linguistic phenomenon of “actions with words” (as the basic study by Austin 1962, *How to Do Things with Words*, points out). While the term refers to practices only described in the historical narrative, they constitute a transformation of what Judith Butler observes about actions in reality: “Acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this *on the*

surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (Butler 1990, 173; original emphases). Andrea Maihofer (1995, 40–53) comments critically on Butler’s performative concept of the body, which she instead develops into the concept of “sex as a mode of existence” (85–108); cf. also Lorey (1996, 109–119) for a discussion of Butler’s understanding of “performative acts.”

4. I here draw on Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse (see especially Foucault 1969), namely, the rules that describe and define what is recognized in a given historical situation, from which subject positions and through which concepts actions are carried out, and how different discourse formations are interrelated. For a more detailed discussion of the concept of discourse relative to historical problems, see Späth (1994, 283–292; 2006, 66–71).

5. Already Veyne (1978, 53) held this fundamentally different notion of ancient ideas compared to the current use of the words for “passive” and “active” sexual practices; Parker (1997, 47) retains the conceptual opposition of “active/passive” positions in this definition, whereas Williams (1999, 160–165) opposes the “receptive role” to the precise terminology of the “insertive role in penetrative acts.”

6. See, for example, *Ann.* 14.45.1, 16.10.4. Often the word *sexus* is found in combination with *aetas*, “age,” and thus includes “the women and the elderly” as the “weak” (*imbecilli*) in the contexts of war (such as when Roman soldiers massacre all enemies and “neither sex nor age” prevents them), and contexts of executions or epidemics (*Ann.* 1.51.1, 56.3; 4.50.2; 6.19.2; 14.33.1, 45.1; 16.13.2). *Sexus* can also simply indicate the male or female sex, such as of a child (*Ann.* 1.58.6; 2.38.4, 84.1), or indicate that a group is comprised of men and women (*Ann.* 14.13.2; 15.54.1). As the exclusive designation of men as a collective (as opposed to women), the term never occurs in the *Annals*.

7. See *Ann.* 1.4.5 (*muliebris inpotentia*), 3.33.4 (*impotentibus mulierum iussis*), 4.57.3 (*matris inpotentia*), 5.1.3 (*mater inpotens*), 12.57.2 (*impotentiam muliebrem*); the relationship between femininity and powerlessness against one’s own passions is already found in other authors, for example, Livy 34.2.2 (*muliebris inpotentia*) and 34.2.13 (*impotenti naturae et indomito animali*), Sen., *Dial.* 12.14.2 (*muliebris*

impotentia), Suet., Nero 28.2 (*ferox atque impotens mater*). In contrast to the far too narrow explanation of *muliebris impotentia* in Santoro L'Hoir (2006, 111–113), I see in the use of the term not just a “female transgression” (111) but on the contrary a term for the “essence” of femininity which is bestowed “naturally” *qua sexus*. When Santoro L'Hoir notes that “*muliebris impotentia* ... defies direct translation,” this appears to arise from her limited understanding of the concept as a “manifestation of *dominatio*” (113); *muliebris impotentia* can be translated in manifold meanings connoted in the Latin texts: the term concerns the general female inability to exercise self-restraint.

8. While Rhiannon Ash believed she could determine that “Tacitus offers subtle portraits of each army” (1999, 168), still this claim of finer differences between the armies of the four usurpers is essentially based on a combination of the representation of armies and leaders and takes too little account of a very stereotypical portrait of armies as *uulgi* (for a convincing discussion in this regard, see Flaig 1992, 26, who describes the image of the army in Tacitus as “lower classes in arms” and therefore as “enemies of the order”). There is a rare exception to the purely collective representation of the army, if a single soldier may be highlighted: cf., for example, *Ann.* 1.16.3, where a soldier named Percennius is introduced as a ringleader of the mutiny of the Pannonian legions and attention is called to his former work as a theater claque in Rome from which he has consequently learned to stir up a crowd because of his participation in theatrical activities (*histrionali studio*) and by implication he was thus closely involved with such infamous professions as stage acting (cf. Edwards 1997; on *infamia* due to the exhibition of the body, through which the actor makes himself available just like the common crier and thus violates his physical integrity, see David 2003; Späth 2011 [in press]). Thus, the figure is established by the characterization of a doubtful masculinity, which is reinforced by the *nocturna colloquia*, the nightly conversations, in which he incites other soldiers to mutiny – the night and secrecy clearly connote femininity. In contradiction, however, immediately afterwards (1.17.1–6) the character is shown in “a kind of speech to the assembled army” in which he quite openly and in practiced rhetoric formulates the complaints and claims of the soldiers.

9. *Ann.* 6.25.2. When we analyze the facts described, Agrippina’s “greed” exists in the *Annals* in a single concrete action that falls entirely within the normative ideas of gender: Agrippina asks Tiberius whom she should marry (*Ann.* 4.53.1); otherwise Tacitus is unable to furnish a single argument for an aspiration to power that would go beyond the development of the political opportunities for

her son. The “party” of Agrippina, so sought after in scholarship, is a historical construct that in the historical account is an assertion placed in the mouths of other characters (especially Sejanus, cf. *Ann.* 4.12.3, 17.3); it is incomprehensible how on these grounds one can still posit an “opposition group” to Agrippina as historical fact (such as in Meise 1969, 71–73, whose untenable claims are adopted at face value by Schürenberg 1975, 20 and n. 3; especially absurd are the fantasies of Bauman 1992, 143, who believes he can truly propose the “first specific political movement headed by a woman”).

10. I am very grateful to Victoria Pagán for her attentive translation of this essay, and to Mark Kyburz for smoothing the remaining wrinkles.

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Women and Domesticity

Kristina Milnor

The distinctive representation of women has long been seen as one of the hallmarks of Tacitus' work. The famous Roman historian Sir Ronald Syme even wondered whether they testified to something negative in the author's own history: "The vivid rendering of angry women might have something to tell about Tacitus' own experiences in the home or outside it" (Syme 1981, 41). Such biographical readings of ancient authors' writings are now out of fashion, but Syme's invocation of "the home" as a possible source for Tacitus' attitudes toward the female sex reflects modern and ancient ideologies which see a close connection between women and domesticity. The longstanding association of men and masculinity with the public sphere and the civic and military activities which take place there is matched by the understanding that women and femininity find their natural place within the private world of house and family. We find numerous expressions of this idea in the products of Roman culture and ideology, such as funerary epitaphs like that for Aymone, wife of Marcus, who is praised for being *lanifica, pia, pudica, frugi, casta*, and *domiseda* ("a woolworker, dutiful, modest, temperate, chaste, and one who sits at home," *CIL* 6.11602) and that for another wife and mother who *nihil potius cupiens quam ut sua gauderet domus* ("desired nothing more than that her home should rejoice," *CIL* 8.647). Or, as the Neronian agricultural writer Columella puts it: "for both among the Greeks, and then among the Romans almost down to the time our fathers can remember, domestic labor belonged to the wife, so that the father of the household only withdrew to his home for rest, with every care set aside, from his work in the outside world" (*nam et apud Graecos, et mox apud Romanos usque in partum nostrorum memoriam fere domesticus labor matronalis fuit, tamquam ad requiem forensium exercitationum omni cura deposita patribus familias intra domestico penates se recipientibus*, *Rust.* 12. pref. 7).

As Columella's statement indicates, the Romans were not alone in the ancient world in dividing society into the female domestic sphere and the masculine civic one – indeed, many pre-modern societies, and even some modern ones, were deeply attached to this gendered dichotomy. Yet Columella also indicates something else, an idea often articulated by Roman moralists and historians, that the time when the spheres were truly separate is past, that modern life has destroyed honorable femininity and the household virtue with which it was associated. Often it is, especially, the wealth and ease of present times which are seen as the culprits as they encourage women to eschew humble domestic tasks. Following the passage quoted above, Columella goes on: “Now, however, when most women abandon themselves to luxury and laziness, to the point that they do not even consider it worthy to undertake the task of wool working, and they turn up their noses at clothing made at home ... it isn't surprising that they consider it a burden to take care for a farm and agricultural tools” (*nunc uero cum pleraeque sic luxu et inertia diffluent, ut ne lanificii quidem curam suscipere dignentur, sed domi confectae uestes fastidio sint ... nihil mirum est, easdem ruris et instrumentorum agrestium cura grauari*, *Rust.* 12. pref. 10). The satirist Juvenal offers a similar perspective in his attack on modern women in *Satire* 6: “Do you ask from where or what source (arose) these monsters (i.e., modern women)? Once upon a time, humble circumstances stood guard over chaste Latin women, nor did their work allow their small homes to be touched by vice” (*unde haec monstra tamen uel quo de fonte requires? / praestabat castas humilis fortuna Latinas / quondam, nec uitiis contigi parua sinebant / tecta labor*, *Juv.* 6.286–289).

In other words, the story of Roman virtue generally, and specifically domestic virtue, was for many authors a historical one, involving a contrast between an imagined honorable past and a vice-ridden present. As a historian Tacitus too participated in the creation and maintenance of this paradigm, but it is clear that he gave to it his own particular cast and used it to his own particular historiographical ends. In part, however, Tacitus' concern with women and domesticity was due to the effect which the advent of imperial rule had on the Roman state. This is perhaps most clearly articulated in the *Annals*, which does not describe the actual beginning of the principate with Octavian/Augustus. Rather, the historian picks up his narrative with the death of the first *princeps* and the succession of his stepson Tiberius and then continues the tale down to the demise of the last Julio-Claudian dynasty, Nero. The story which is told, therefore, is not so much that of the foundation of the imperial system, but how that system, as it had been created by Augustus, passed down through the hands of his less and less qualified descendants. Indeed, at the very

beginning of his narrative, Tacitus notes that people were generally content under the rule of the first *princeps*, “as long as Augustus was in good health and maintained himself and his house in peace” (*dum Augustus aetate ualidus seque et domum in pacem sustentauit*, *Ann.* 1.4.1). When, however, he grew older and his strength waned, some began to discuss the possibility of freedom, as well as the defects of the various candidates for succession, including Tiberius whose disabilities included “his mother, with her feminine domineering nature” (*matrem muliebri inpotentia*, *Ann.* 1.4.5) – who, we are told only a couple of sentences earlier, also “had taken power over the elderly Augustus” (*senem Augustum deuinxerat*, *Ann.* 1.3.4). As proof of this, her first appearance in Tacitus’ narrative is as the author of “maternal machinations” (*matris artibus*, *Ann.* 1.3.3) leading to an outright demand that Augustus officially adopt Tiberius, at the same time as she sees to it that other candidates for the succession are safely put out of the way. In other words the fate of Augustus’ house and correspondingly of the Roman state with which it was intertwined was to a great extent in the hands of a woman.

Of course, as Tacitus notes, not everyone trusted Livia, nor should they have. In describing the actual moment when Augustus died and rule passed to Tiberius, the historian makes it clear that it was Livia and her control not just of the dynastic house but the space of the imperial household who determines the outcome. Tacitus suggests that Livia, fearing that her husband was on the verge of reconciling with another claimant of the throne, secretly killed Augustus and sent an urgent note to her eldest son to come quickly to Rome from his post abroad. Because, however, she had carefully sealed off the house from outsiders, no one knew when Tiberius arrived whether he found Augustus alive or dead. Tacitus remarks, “Livia had enclosed the house and the streets with devoted guards, and periodically cheerful reports were issued, until, with everything having been arranged as the circumstances demanded, the news was released that Augustus was dead and Tiberius was in charge” (*acribus namque custodiis domum et uias saepserat Liuiā, laetique interdum nuntii uulgabantur, donec prouisis quae tempus monebat simul excessisse Augustum et rerum potiri Neronem fama eadem tulit*, *Ann.* 1.5.4). Livia thus plays a privileged role in the succession, not just because she was wife of one ruler and mother of the next, but because she has power over the space of the imperial house; she controls what happens within it and what information about those internal events passes to the outside. In a world in which the fate of the Roman state lies in the hands of a single family and depends to a very great extent on the vicissitudes of the relationships within it, women’s domestic power within the house and household could make a great deal of civic difference.

Tacitus' description of Livia's role in the succession of Tiberius is just one example of the ways in which the historian exploits and explores female domesticity, not just as a set of traditional virtues and values linking women with the home, but as a social structure and powerful ideological concept. This is particularly clear in the *Annals*, but, as we will see below, also appears in the *Germania* and the *Agricola* as a way of framing the contrast between Roman and foreign mores which the historian wishes to represent. In both of these early works, we find domestic life as one of the places where Roman culture is either succeeding or (more frequently) failing to reflect morally the transcendence which the state had achieved militarily. Thus, from the very beginning of his writing career, Tacitus saw domestic life as deeply implicated in the processes and progresses of the Roman empire. But it was only when he turned to the *Annals*, and that work's exploration of how the Julio-Claudian house created the system of imperial governance, that he began to see female domesticity not just as a moral but also a political problem. In this way Tacitus zeroed in on a very real historical concern – the way that the imperial system blurred the traditional boundary between domestic and civic spheres – and reflected a historiographical one – that writing the story of the beginning of the principate entailed writing the story of the household affairs of the imperial family. By identifying and thematizing these two issues, Tacitus not only showed himself one of the greatest readers of early imperial culture and politics but also ineluctably changed the ways that subsequent authors and historians would understand the writing of Roman history.

1. Domesticity and Ethnography: The *Agricola* and *Germania*

We will begin with these two works, which might be called “para-historical,” to see how Tacitus saw the question of women and domestic life before he turned to writing the story of the Julio-Claudian dynasty and its effect on Rome. One of the noteworthy facts about the *Agricola* in this context is that its very origins were (in a sense) domestic: Tacitus' link to the great man and certainly part of the impulse to write the book lay in the historian's marriage to Agricola's daughter (Ag. 9.6). She and her mother, not coincidentally, are praised in the text as manifestations of the good domestic practices which the general pursued when not on campaign in Britain (Ag. 6.1–2). Indeed, Agricola is represented to have arisen himself from a solid Roman home, built by a virtuous Roman woman. His

mother, Julia Procilla, appears early in the text as a woman “of unusual morality” (*rarae castitatis*, Ag. 4.1) who saw to it that her son received an appropriate education: “He passed his childhood and youth in her care and kindness, educated in all the forms of the liberal arts” (*in huius sinu indulgentiaque educatus per omnem honestarum atrium cultum pueritiam adolescentiamque transegit*, Ag. 4. 2). Perhaps most importantly, we also find her inculcating her son with the moderation for which he would later become famous. Tacitus tells us that in his youth the future general had much enthusiasm for the study of Greek philosophy – “beyond what was allowable for a Roman and member of the senatorial class” (*ultra quam concessum Romano ac senatori*) – but that his mother stepped in to “restrain his inflamed and burning spirit” (*incensum ac flagrantem animum coercuisset*, Ann. 4.3). Agricola’s mother is thus credited with setting her son on the path to the heroic *Romanitas* for which he is celebrated by Tacitus.

Julia Procilla thus enters into the narrative as a prime example of the Roman matron: a virtuous wife and firm but caring mother. It is ironic, therefore, that this paradigm of domestic virtue subsequently exits the story as the result of a political disturbance: the historian tells us that she fell victim to the fleet of Otho, one of the claimants to the imperial throne during the year of four emperors which followed the death of Nero in 69 CE. The marauders invaded Julia Procilla’s country estate and killed her for the sake of the wealth that was stored there (Ag. 7.1). The idea that one of the hallmarks of Roman civil war was the invasion of the domestic sphere by civic conflict was, again, both a historical reality and a historiographical trope, which found its most potent expression in descriptions of the civil conflicts which preceded Octavian’s rise to power after the assassination of Julius Caesar (Milnor 2005, 186–238). In these representations the violence and chaos of the realm of politics and the men within it are often contrasted with the heroic domestic morality displayed by women. Indeed, we have one real historical example of a woman who successfully defended her home from attackers (*Laudatio Turiae* 2.9a), but we only know about it because her husband produced the story as part of her funeral oration – a text which also singles her out as a premier example of typical female *domestica bona* (“domestic virtues,” 1.30). Like Agricola’s mother this woman too demonstrated her traditional female merits by standing between her house and invaders from the “other” sphere.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when domesticity shows up again in the *Agricola*, it is again in the context of an armed invasion – but this time the invaders are led by Agricola himself. Repeatedly in the section of the text which describes the conquest of Britain, a contrast is drawn between the Romans, who are motivated by the

desire for empire, and the natives, who are defending their homes. As the Britons are represented as saying to one another, “For us, the reasons for battle are our fatherland, our wives, our parents; for the Romans, they are greed and extravagance” (*sibi patriam coniuges parentes, illis auaritiam et luxuriam causas belli esse*, Ag. 15.4). Overtly, of course, the text supports imperial expansion and paints the Britons as barbarians who, on some level, were destined to be conquered by the superior Romans. On the other hand Tacitus seems to go out of his way to give the natives the opportunity to voice their perspective on the conflict. One such moment occurs just before the decisive battle of Mons Graupius, the final one represented in the narrative and therefore the climax of Tacitus’ description of Agricola’s triumphant time in Britain. The historian sets up the battle with a pair of speeches, one delivered by the British general Calgacus and the other by Agricola, as each attempts to rally the spirits of his troops for the coming battle. Although the speeches are presented as a pair, they are very different from one another and reveal the different characters of the men who speak them and the nations they are supposed to represent.

Many of Calgacus’ arguments are framed around the contrast between the Britons’ heroic defense of their homes and families and the Roman army’s selfish and ignoble motivations for the battle. As he remarks, “Nature desires that his children and other family members should be the most dear to each person: these are carried away by conscription to be servants elsewhere; even if our wives and sisters escape rape by a stranger, they are defiled under the guise of friendship and hospitality” (*liberos cuique ac propinquos suos natura carissimos esse uoluit: hi per dilectus alibi seruituri auferuntur; coniuges sororesque etiam si hostilem libidinem effugereunt, nomine amicorum atque hospitium polluantur*, Ag. 31.1). He goes on to point out that, by contrast, the Roman army is not even especially “Roman,” but is rather made up of recruits from formerly hostile nations now under the rule of Rome and forced to fight in Britain not by any loyalty to their conquerors, but by “fear and dread” (*metus ac terror*): “No wives inspire the Romans; no parents would reproach their flight; for most of them, there is no homeland, or only an alien one” (*nullae Romanos coniuges accendunt, nulli parentes fugam exprobraturi sunt; aut nulla plerisque patria aut alia est*, Ag. 32.2). Agricola, on the other hand, makes the case to his troops on the basis of imperial and military glory, beginning with his opening statement that “it is the seventh year, fellow soldiers, since, under the strength and good fortune of the Roman empire, by means of our loyalty and hard work, you began the conquest of Britain” (*septimus annus est, commilitones, ex quo uirtute et auspiciis imperii Romani, fide atque opera nostra Britanniam uicistis*, Ag.

33.2). He continues in the same vein, underscoring the idea that the only way the troops will escape this desolate country is to fight bravely; he emphasizes the long roads they have marched, the mountains they have climbed, the forests they have penetrated, and the rivers they have forded. He notes that they have gone far beyond where any army before had even imagined going, finally remarking “nor would it be shameful to have died, here at the end of the earth and the natural world” (*nec inglorium fuerit in ipso terrarum ac naturae fine cecidisse*, Ag. 33.6). In other words, while Calgacus emphasizes his troops’ intimate and “homey” connection to the land they defend, Agricola sees it as the most foreign and strangest place imaginable.

As I said above, it is hard to make the case that the *Agricola* is ultimately an anti-imperial text. Yet it is clear that Tacitus is alert to the difficulties presented by the expansion of Roman territory to “the ends of the earth.” It has been noted that the arguments which Calgacus adduces in his rhetorical attack on Agricola’s army are some of the ones which were traditionally used in declamatory exercises criticizing the imperial project (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, 253–254). It is noteworthy, however, that the anti-Roman arguments which Tacitus chooses to put in the mouths of the Britons turn on the idea of home and domestic morality: the *avaritia* and *luxuria* which, the natives claim, motivate Agricola’s army to war recall the qualities which moralists contended threatened the traditional simplicity and frugality of the Roman home; the expansion of the empire to territories so far from Italy, as well as the dependence on recruits from conquered nations, meant that the Roman army was made up of men territorially alienated, fighting to destroy others’ homes even though they had none of their own. Although the biography may open with the invocation of traditional Roman domestic morality in the person of Julia Procilla, there is some doubt raised by the end that the current political and military system will serve to protect or maintain it. Indeed, when the historian – in his remarkable reversal of the traditions of the funerary *laudatio* at the end of the work – describes the things which Agricola was lucky *not* to have survived to see, “the exile and flight of so many aristocratic women” (*tot nobilissimarum feminarum exilia et fuga*, Ag. 45.1) is prominent among them. Roman homes too, like the British ones, ultimately suffered destruction under the rule of Domitian.

There is thus, I would argue, a subtle but explicit contrast suggested in the *Agricola* between “foreign” domesticity, as practiced by the Britons and destroyed by Agricola’s army, and traditional Roman household morality, celebrated but imperiled under the Roman empire when Tacitus knew it. This contrast is also present in the *Germania*, which offers a more detailed description of the

particular domestic practices of the German peoples as part of its overall ethnographic project. The comparison with Rome is less explicit than in Tacitus' other work of the same period, but the sense of discomfort with the supposedly superior imperial culture is still very present. It is worth noting here, perhaps somewhat parenthetically, that the idea that fundamental cultural differences might be measured by domestic practices – particularly those relating to the treatment of women – does not originate with Tacitus. Indeed, it is a feature of Roman ethnographic representations ranging from Horace's depiction of the Scythians (*Carm.* 3.24.17–24), in which he praises the remarkable chastity of the “barbarian” women, to the architect Vitruvius' discussion of different house-building styles in the different parts of the Mediterranean (*Vitr.* 6.5–7). Similarly, the historian Cornelius Nepos sees the treatment and behavior of women in and outside the home as an important index of the cultural differences between the Greeks and Romans: he notes that Roman women “hold the foremost place in the home” (*primum locum tenet aedium*) and are commonly invited out to dinner parties, while among the Greeks, “she is not invited to dinner, except with near relations ... nor does she sit anywhere except the innermost part of the house” (*neque in conuiuium adhibetur nisi propinquorum, neque sedet nisi in interiore parte aedium*, *Lives of Foreign Generals*, pref. 6–7). Tacitus is thus not alone in seeing gendered household practices as one way of thinking about larger distinctions between societies and cultures.

In some ways Tacitus' description of German domestic relations echoes his picture of the Britons. Thus, for instance, fairly early in the text we learn that it is a German custom to bring women and children – the relatives of those fighting – to the battlefield, in order that they should serve as “the most sacred witnesses, the greatest bearers of praise” (*sanctissimi testes ... maximi laudatores*, *Ger.* 7.2). The women also tend the wounds of the soldiers and provide them with food and encouragement in their efforts. This method is extremely effective, Tacitus remarks, as there have been instances where armies on the point of retreating were turned back “by the insistence of their entreaties, the baring of their breasts, and the reminder that they (the women) would suffer enslavement” (*constantia precum et obiectu pectorum et monstrata comminus captiuitate*, *Ger.* 8.1). The actual, physical, presence of the families on the battlefield in Germany recalls their imagined presence on the field in Britain, where they were invoked by Calgacus to inspire his troops. Although Tacitus does not state it in the *Germania*, the corollary is implicit: in Germany as in Britain, such a tactic is not possible for the Roman invaders, who leave their wives (if they have them) behind when they march to war in distant lands.

On another level, however, the Germans have less in common with the Britons than they do with the Romans – albeit not the Romans of Tacitus’ time. Repeatedly, Tacitus suggests that domestic life as it is practiced in Germany recalls the famous old-time morality of archaic Rome, before the rot of imperial luxury corrupted women and the sphere they inhabit. Thus, for instance, he praises German child-rearing practices: “in every home (children), naked and grubby, grow into such (strong) limbs and bodies as we admire” (*in omni domo nudi ac sordidi in hos artus, in haec corpora quae miramur excrescent*, *Ger.* 20.1). He goes on to remark on the German habit of mothers breastfeeding their own infants rather than handing them over to wet-nurses, as was widespread among the upper classes in Rome. This Roman practice was deplored by moralists, including Tacitus himself in the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, where Messala complains “once upon a time, each child, born from a legitimate parent, was brought up not in the room of a hired nurse, but in the lap of his mother, whose particular pride was to oversee her home and attend her children ... now, though, the newborn infant is handed over to some little Greek servant girl” (*nam pridem suus cuique filius, ex casta parente natus, non in cella emptae nutricis sed gremio ac sinu matris educabatur, cuius praecipua laus erat tueri domum et inseruire liberis ... at nunc natus infans delegatur Graeculae alicui ancillae*, *Dial.* 28.4–29.1). Indeed, childbearing and rearing is valued among the Germans by men and women, since, as Tacitus concludes, “there is no reward for childlessness” (*nec ulla orbitatis pretia*, *Ger.* 20.3). As James Rives (1999, 209) notes, this statement seems calculated to recall and contrast with the prevalence of childless living at Rome, where moralists accused the modern-day wealthy of living without designated heirs in order to attract the attention of legacy hunters. In Germany, such a practice would be worthless and shameful.

Tacitus is similarly impressed when he describes the conduct of marriage among the Germans – “one ought to praise no other part of their customs more” (*nec ullam morum partem magis laudaueris*, *Ger.* 18.1) – again, in explicit contrast with the practices he sees around him in contemporary Rome. He sees not just the marriage customs but the simplicity of German lifestyle as the reason that the women maintain their chastity: “Therefore they live with their modesty protected, not corrupted by the allurements of the games nor the provocations of dinner parties” (*ergo saepta pudicitia agunt, nullis spectaculorum inlecebris, nullis conuiuiorum inrotationibus corruptae*, *Ger.* 19.1). Neither men nor women have any knowledge of “the secrets of letters” (*litterarum secreta*), a punning reference to general German illiteracy but also the clandestine love-letters which figure so prominently in Roman descriptions of the aristocratic demi-monde

(e.g., Ov., *Ars* 437–458; cf. Rives 1999, 203). In the very rare cases of adultery, Tacitus continues, the Germans deal with the offending woman with laudable harshness, so that she is not only banished from her home and family, but completely shunned by the community, “for no one there laughs at vice, nor calls it modern to corrupt and be corrupted” (*nemo enim illic uitia ridet, nec corrumpere et corrumpi saeculum uocatur*, *Ger.* 19.1). German women do not love their husbands simply as husbands, but as a kind of abstraction of marriage (*ne tamquam maritum sed tamquam matrimonium ament*, *Ger.* 19.2); nor would they consider it anything other than wickedness to practice family planning (*numerum liberorum finire*, “to limit the number of children,” *Ger.* 19.2). In short, the historian concludes triumphantly, “there, good morals are stronger than good laws are elsewhere” (*plusque ibi boni mores ualent quam alibi bonae leges*, *Ger.* 19.2) – a clear reference to Roman morality legislation like the Augustan social laws (prominently discussed by Tacitus at *Ann.* 3.25–28), whose necessity and failure are seen by many moralists as evidence of the corruption of modern life.

Tacitus thus clearly sees the Germans as on one level an echo of what the Romans were once and still could be if they gave up their wicked ways and returned to the simple virtues of their ancestors. The good domestic practices of the German “noble savages” show the merits of a society uncorrupted by the wealth and luxury which have afflicted Rome in recent centuries. In the same way as in the *Agricola*, therefore, Tacitus in the *Germania* seems caught between the standard Roman defense of imperialism – that the Romans were stronger and therefore superior to the nations they conquered – and a certain discomfort with the moral status of contemporary Rome, especially in relation to the “uncorrupted” barbarians against which she fought. Domesticity in these texts, therefore, represents a way in which the author can gauge the fundamental cultural differences between conqueror and conquered without getting into the messy realm of politics; because the proper construction of family and home were imagined to be issues which every human society needed to negotiate, they could be used as a common measure between places as different as Germany and Rome. Tacitus thus uses domestic life here as a tool ultimately to make a statement about Roman virtue and vices, and although his framing of the issues may display his signature subtlety and literary sensibility, he is in general following the outlines drawn by other writers of moral and ethnographic texts. As I noted above, however, when he turns to the representation of domesticity in the *Annals*, Tacitus makes a shift away from a pure focus on morality and turns instead to the intersection of morals and politics. In this sense the later historical text both builds on and contrasts with the ways

that domesticity was used in the author's earlier ethnographic works.

2. Domestic Politics: The *Annals*

The story told in the *Annals* is not just the creation of the Roman imperial state but the ways in which that state became intertwined with the Julio-Claudian dynasty. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that Tacitus chooses to begin his narrative not with the triumph of Octavian and the “Augustan settlement” of 27 BCE – which most historians see as the true political beginning of the principate – but with the succession of Tiberius, that moment when it became clear that Augustus had founded a system more akin to a hereditary monarchy than to a republic. Taking into consideration, moreover, the historian's representation of Livia's role in her son's accession, it becomes very clear that the old historical and historiographical divisions between public (military, political) history and the story of women, homes, and families have been overturned.

Of course, Tacitus is not the first historian to see that the history of the Roman state had long been intertwined with the history of women and the domestic realm. One of the best-known stories of early Rome, recounted by the early imperial historian Livy, is that of Lucretia, who had the misfortune to attract the erotic attention of the son of Tarquinius Superbus, then king of the Roman state. As Livy has it, the prince became enamored of Lucretia after her husband boasted of her good qualities as a wife and the men went to view her performing her domestic tasks in her home; the young Tarquinius then went back in secret and raped her. Lucretia's response to this was to call her husband, along with other friends and relatives including Lucius Junius Brutus, into her presence; announce the crime; and call on them to avenge her disgrace. She then killed herself with a knife. While her relatives reacted with shock and horror, Brutus seized the knife and, carrying it into the forum, used it and Lucretia's story to rouse the anger of the populace against the Tarquins and the monarchy in general. This led to the first “Roman revolution,” the overthrow of the kings and the establishment of the republic. In other words, the most important political transformation of the early Roman state occurred because of a domestic offense – one which, ironically, was brought on by the unimpeachable domestic virtue of a Roman matron. In this sense Livy too sees the boundary between the world of politics and that of the home as porous, so that events in one sphere may have profound and lasting effects on the other.

It is possible (indeed, likely) that Livy's representation of events in

early Rome such as Lucretia's rape was influenced by the fact that he was writing at the beginning of the principate and thus had the opportunity to view first-hand the rise of the imperial domus as a central institution in the Roman state. Yet the earlier historian's understanding of a "porous" boundary between domestic and civic spheres is very different from the picture we find in Tacitus' *Annals*, where household life and the world of women appear not as an occasional influence on politics but as a shadowy alternative system which can and does endanger the primacy of the world of men. Whereas Livy sees the two spheres as complementary to one another – so that Lucretia's feminine virtue and heroism can translate to a virtuous and heroic outcome for the Roman state – Tacitus understands women's domestic roles as a strange, unregulated influence on the civic life of Rome. Thus, when the historian imagines Livia as *gravis in rem publicam mater, gravis domui Caesarum nouerca* ("an onerous mother to the republic, an onerous stepmother to the house of the Caesars," *Ann.* 1.10.5), he deliberately echoes the title officially granted to Augustus, *pater patriae* ("father of the nation") in the first half of the description. At the same time, however, the second half reminds the reader that it was her adoption as stepmother to the imperial family, and not the vote of the Senate, which gave her the public role.

As a further and more sustained example of the ways in which Tacitus sees a competition between the civic sphere of men and the domestic sphere of women – a competition in which the men are actually disadvantaged – occurs during the trial of Calpurnius Piso, who is charged with murdering Tiberius' popular nephew Germanicus. The episode is central to Book 3 of the *Annals*, a book which is recognized as deeply concerned with the roles of women, both imperial and otherwise, in Tiberian Rome (Woodman and Martin 1996, 11–17). Thus, for instance, it opens with Germanicus' widow, Agrippina, returning to Italy with her husband's ashes and, much to the emperor's chagrin, garnering huge popular acclaim as she progresses from the port to the capital city (*Ann.* 3. 1–4); the book closes with the funeral of Junia Tertulla, niece of Cato Uticensis, wife of Gaius Cassius, and sister of Brutus the tyrannicide (*Ann.* 3.75). In each instance the historian represents a woman whose male relatives have fallen victim to political vicissitudes, but who herself has managed to survive and even flourish. These two episodes frame the story of the Pisonian conspiracy, in which Piso is tried and convicted for murdering Germanicus, but his wife Plancina – whom Tacitus sees as equally if not more guilty of the crime – is saved by her close association with Livia. Tacitus notes that "the hatred towards Plancina was the same (as toward her husband), but her influence was greater,

to the point that it was not clear how much the emperor could do in regards to her ... When she obtained pardon through the secret appeals of Livia, little by little she began to distance herself from her husband and to divide the defense” (*eadem Plancinae invidia, maior gratia; eoque ambiguum habebatur quantum Caesari in eam liceret ... ut secretis Augustae precibus ueniam obtinuit, paulatim segregari a marito, diuidere defensionem coepit, Ann. 3.15.1*). Plancina is subsequently brought before the Senate, but while her husband is condemned, she is pardoned “due to the pleas of Livia” (*ob preces Augustae, Ann. 3.17.4*). Like Agrippina and Junia – indeed, like Livia herself – Plancina is able to play a role in the public sphere but is protected by her gender and her relationships with other women from its consequences.

Indeed, the threat posed by elite women such as Plancina and Agrippina, who customarily accompanied their husbands when they left the capital for provincial posts, is made explicit in *Annals* 3 during a famous debate in the Senate. A certain Caecina Severus makes the proposal that women should be forbidden to join their governor-husbands because they are liable to steal men’s power: Caecina threatens, “two commanders’ departures to be attended; two official residences; with more willful and unrestrained female commands ... they rule homes, public business, and now even the army” (*duorum egressus coli, duo esse praetoria; peruicacibus magis et impotentibus mulierum iussis ... domos, fora, iam et exercitus regerent, Ann. 3.33.4*). The word which Tacitus uses here of female orders, *impotens* or “unrestrained,” is an important one and often comes up in his description of powerful women. Thus, for instance, the historian describes Livia and her step-great-granddaughter Agrippina the Younger – powerful mother of the emperor Nero – as displaying *muliebris inpotentia* (“womanly intemperance,” Livia at *Ann. 1.4.5*, Agrippina at *12.57.2*). The term *inpotentia* and its cognate adjective ought etymologically to designate powerlessness; in classical Latin, however, it comes to signify not an absolute lack of power but a lack of power over oneself and thus “ungovernability” or “violence.” In this sense it is frequently associated with women and their inability to control their passionate desires (e.g., at *Livy 34.2.2*). When Tacitus uses it of elite women, however, it seems strangely paradoxical: how can it make sense to describe these formidable characters as powerless, either in regard to others or themselves? The cognate adjective is found in Tacitus’ brief epitaph for Livia, where (I think) the historian’s irony is clear: “She lived up to old-fashioned standards in the inviolability of her house, was courteous even beyond what was considered appropriate for women in ancient times; she was an unrestrained (*impotens*) mother, a generous wife, well matched to the

subtlety of her husband and to the deceitfulness of her son" (*sanctitate domus priscum ad morem, comis ultra quam antiquis feminis probatum, mater impotens, uxor facilis et cum artibus mariti, simulatione filii bene composita*, *Ann.* 5.1.3). Livia's "womanly weakness" is hardly that, as she is praised here for her moderation in domestic life and her ability to match herself against the qualities of her husband and son. She thus emerges from Tacitus' description as a woman whose female roles and abilities make her formidable. It is in her domestic capacity as a wife and a mother that she is most to be feared.

The fact that Tacitus uses the same phrase, *muliebris inpotentia*, to describe both Livia and Agrippina the Younger is only one of a number of parallels between the two women. In another testament to the importance of women and their "domestic" roles to the text, the historian brackets his *Annals* with the figures of two domineering mothers of emperor-sons. In fact, Agrippina explicitly takes Livia as her model in dealing with her husband Claudius' death and funeral at *Annals* 12.69, and her behavior during his final illness – regulating information and insuring the accession of her son to the throne – clearly echoes Livia's activities while Augustus lay dying. At the same time, however, Tacitus makes it clear that Agrippina has expanded and elaborated Livia's role; while the earlier empress worked entirely behind the scenes, Agrippina insists on actually attending meetings of the Senate, concealed behind a curtain (*Ann.* 13.5). In part Agrippina's power seems to be based on a further extension of Julio-Claudian "domestic politics" into the public sphere; that is, Tacitus repeatedly emphasizes the fact that she is politically important because she is directly related to the divine Augustus, being descended from his only biological child, the elder Julia. This distinguishes her from, for instance, members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty such as her second husband, the emperor Claudius, whose only relation to the first *princeps* is through his grandmother Livia. As T. P. Wiseman noted at one point, "Claudius' use of the name 'Caesar' was presumably based on the adoption of his grandmother Livia into the *gens Iulia* ... but her adoption did not, of course, affect *his* position" (1982, 59 n. 7). This was, it seems, a potential disability for Claudius as an imperial figure, so that Tacitus has the freedman Pallas argue for Claudius' marriage to Agrippina on the grounds that "he should join together the descendants of the Julian and Claudian families and not allow a woman of proven fertility, still in the prime of life, to carry away the glory of the Caesars into another house" (*familiae Iuliae Claudiaequae posteros coniungeret, ne femina expertae fecunditatis, integra iuuenta, claritudinem Caesarum aliam in domum ferret*, *Ann.* 12.2.3).

Thus, Agrippina's position is based not just on the fact that, like Livia, she was married to one emperor and mother of the next; she

also has the added advantage of a genetic connection to Augustus and the Julian house. Of course, due to the vicissitudes of history that connection comes through the female line, in part because Augustus left behind only one biological child, a daughter. Indeed, as has been pointed out (Corbier 1995, 181–182), the hazards of being a male heir to the Julio-Claudian dynasty seem to have meant that it was often only the female members of a given generation who survived to produce significant offspring, their brothers and male cousins having succumbed to perils of military service or political treachery. The burden, therefore, of carrying on the house of Augustus fell to its women, a circumstance which Tacitus sees as giving them real, if somewhat undefined, power. When, for instance, Nero attempts to have his praetorian commander Burrus execute Agrippina, the soldier refuses, remarking that “the praetorians ... remembering Germanicus would not dare any savage deed against his offspring” (*praetorianos ... memores ... Germanici nihil aduersus progeniem eius atrox ausuros*, *Ann.* 14.7.4). The idea that Agrippina could marshal political and military support, despite her lack of a formal political position, does not seem far-fetched to her son, who uses it as a way of deflecting criticism after he has her assassinated: Nero claims “that she had expected to share in the imperial power, to have the praetorians swear themselves to a woman, and create a like disgrace for the Senate and the people” (*quod consortium imperii iuraturasque in feminae uerba praetorias cohortes idemque dedecus senatus et populi sperauisset*, 14.11.1); he goes on to exclaim, “how much effort had he (Nero) expended to prevent her from bursting into the Senate house in order to issue imperial answers to foreign ambassadors!” (*quanto suo labore perpetratum ne inrumperet curiam, ne gentibus externis responsa daret*, *Ann.* 14.11.1).

In other words, by the time Tacitus’ narrative reaches Nero, the boundary between the domestic affairs of the Julio-Claudian house and those of the imperial state has almost completely broken down. This can be seen in Agrippina but also in Nero himself, who appears in the *Annals* as both a deeply emasculated figure and one who cannot keep his personal business decently hidden from view. Thus, for instance, Tacitus reports that

ipse quo fidem adquireret nihil usquam perinde laetum sibi, publicis locis struere conuiuia totaque urbe quasi domo uti ... uni ex illo contaminorum grege (nomen Pythagorae fuit) in modum sollemnium coniugorum denupsisset. inditum imperatori flammeum, missi auspices, dos et genialis torus et faces nuptiales, cuncta denique spectata quae etiam in femina nox operit.

(*Ann.* 15. 37.1, 4)

He held dinner parties in public places and used the whole city as

though it was his house ... he wed one of that noxious crowd (his name was Pythagoras), in the ritual manner of marriage. The bridal veil was put over the emperor, witnesses were provided, the dowry and the marriage bed and the nuptial torches (were all present) – everything, in short, was seen which, even when it is a woman getting married, is covered in darkness.

This passage not only emphasizes Nero's willingness – indeed, eagerness – to take on a female role, it also drives home the point that he is unable to maintain a proper distinction between public and private business. It seems hardly coincidental that in Tacitus' account, as well as those others which survive detailing the scandals of Nero's reign, one of the most potent and enduring symbols of his decadence should be the so-called Golden House, a palace built on the ruins of a large swath of Rome which had been destroyed in the great fire of 64 CE (*Ann.* 15.41–43). Here, again, Nero manages to confuse the distinction between his domestic space and the public places of the city and to create a material realization of the symbolic problem which had long bedeviled – in Tacitus' estimation – the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

It is ironic, given how it subsequently turned out, that Nero in the *Annals* begins his reign with a speech guaranteeing that he would not follow in the footsteps of his predecessors, who had made the imperial house the center of all public authority: “for (he said that) he would not be the judge of every matter, so that – with prosecutors and defendants shut up in a single house – the power of a few should roam free; nothing in his own dwelling was open to bribery or ambition; there would be a firm distinction between his house and the state” (*non enim se negotiorum omnium iudicem fore, ut clausis unam intra domum accusatoribus et reis paucorum potentia grassaretur; nihil in penetibus suis uenale aut ambitioni peruium; discretam domum et rem publicam*, *Ann.* 13.4.2). This statement may come across as hypocritical, but at the same time Tacitus does note that some of Nero's early promises in regard to the division of senatorial and imperial power were implemented. Yet the historian immediately follows his description of this first speech with the story that Agrippina insisted on attending meetings of the Senate by sitting in a specially built alcove, concealed behind a curtain. Apparently, from there she objected to measures which the Senate attempted to pass with its newly established authority (*Ann.* 13.5). It is possible, therefore, to see Nero's initial intentions as good, but ultimately unable to be realized, in part because of flaws in his own character but also because of the system which he inherited. That system was one in which not only had the public–private divide already been compromised by earlier emperors, but also women like Agrippina had

established ways of translating their domestic roles into political influence.

Tacitus, like Romans generally, believed that there was a natural, normal divide between the domestic world of women and the civic and military world of men. At the same time, however, he also recognized that there were moments in Roman history when that boundary could represent something more than a social and moral truth – as, for instance, when the advance of the imperial project brought the Romans into contact with civilizations less “civilized” but perhaps also less morally compromised than the invaders. It is this situation and its implications that the historian explores in the *Agricola* and *Germania*. Ultimately, however, in those texts domestic life remains mostly an issue of relative stages of moral development, even though Tacitus’ discussion does raise the uncomfortable specter of an empire whose military success masks her empty soul. But Tacitus encounters a different historical and a different historiographical problem when he turns his attention to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, which (for better or worse) created the system of imperial government that ruled Rome even in the historian’s own time. In telling the story of that dynasty in the *Annals*, Tacitus shows how elite women’s domestic roles could, and did, become a political force to be reckoned with; the problem was no longer one of individual morality but of the constitution of the Roman state. Perhaps most disturbingly for Tacitus, though, imperial women were often most powerful when they were performing their most domestic of functions – when they were occupying their positions as sisters, mothers, and wives of imperial men. The issue was thus not a simple one of reestablishing the correct roles for the sexes, but of questioning the imperial system which by its very nature gave household life a presence on the public stage. Thus, although the *Annals* details the eventual fall of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, destroyed at least in part by its diseased domestic politics, the fact that Rome continued to be ruled by imperial “houses” meant that the nature of civic life – and the subject matter of political histories – had fundamentally and forever changed.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The representation and reality of women’s place in the home has long been a subject of interest to women’s historians, particularly those who work on the nineteenth century. Two seminal texts in this area are Armstrong (1987) and Poovey (1988). A more recent work in the same field which focuses on the interrelation of public and private

spheres is Chase and Levenson (2000). Scholarship on the ancient world has lagged somewhat behind, in part because of a lack of information generally about women's lives. Some noteworthy exceptions, however, are Peskowitz (1997) and D'Ambra (1993), both of which look at the ideological significance of women's weaving. Dixon (2001, 113–132) also provides an admirable overview of the issues particular to Roman women and culture. On the role of morality generally in Roman politics and society, Edwards (1993) makes an excellent introduction, although Lintott (1972) is better for a reader specifically interested in the relationship in the Roman mind between imperialism and moral decline. Little has been written about the representation of family life in the *Agricola* and *Germania*, although some comments about the latter may be found in O'Gorman (1993). For the ideological importance of family and household life to the early Roman empire, Severy (2003) is an invaluable overview; Milnor (2005) is less concerned with specific historical issues and more with representation and contains some discussion specifically about Tacitus (esp. pp. 143–146, 179–185, 285–304). On the nature and constitution of the Roman household generally, see Saller (1984), and for how that was translated to the imperial family, Flory (1996). The bibliography on imperial women in the *Annals* is vast, but for analyses similar to those presented here, see, for example, Santoro L'Hoir (1992, 1994), and Ginsburg (1993, 2006).

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Postcolonial Approaches to Tacitus

Nancy Shumate

1. What Is a Postcolonial Approach?

“Postcolonial,” like “deconstruction,” is a term that has come to be bandied about so loosely that it makes sense to begin by considering briefly the range of its meanings in contemporary use, with a focus on the meaning that will be most relevant here. In very general terms and depending on context, “postcolonial” can refer to a period, a type of literature, or a set of critical practices. The period identified by the first use is generally understood as the time after World War II when the European imperial powers, and especially Britain, gave up or lost control of their far-flung colonies (though even this apparently straightforward use of the term is not uncontroversial, because it implies that colonialism is a thing of the past, whereas its vestiges arguably persist in “neo-colonial” power imbalances among nations today). The notion of the continuing effects of colonialism is present too in the field of postcolonial literature, that is, writing produced by formerly colonized peoples that “assert(s) itself by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing (its) differences from the assumptions of the imperial center” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1989, 2). Finally, a postcolonial critical stance is one whose driving concern is the “contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism” (Loomba 1998, 12). This contestation could take the form of political action, but more commonly it resides in the realm of the textual as a particular set of reading practices, especially as they are applied to overtly or covertly colonial or imperial texts.

Scholars and critics have long studied and written about modern imperialism and its corollary, colonialism; they have explicated colonial texts and what we now call postcolonial literatures. Even when they have been critical of empire, however, their approach

would not be considered “postcolonial” unless they are critical in specific ways. Postcolonial modes of critique are heavily indebted to, in Loomba’s words, the “revolution, within Western intellectual traditions, in thinking about ... language and how it articulates experience, how ideologies work, how human subjectivities are formed, and what we might mean by culture” (Loomba 1998, 20). The story of this revolution, which has taken place over the last forty years or so, is far beyond the scope of this essay and is in any case well known by now. It will suffice to say that in its course academic critics, drawing on the theories of iconoclastic philosophers, sociologists, historians, and/or linguists such as Gramsci, Althusser, Saussure, Foucault, and Derrida, abandoned traditional humanistic modes of interpretation with their assumptions about essential identities and transcendent truths. They began to ground their work instead in ideas about the interrelationship of language, knowledge, and power, wherein language constructs official networks of knowledge, or “discourses,” which in turn are used to undergird systems of oppression. For literary studies this reorientation meant that texts and the representations they deploy were now viewed as a prime site for the inscription of dominant discourses (and sometimes for resistance to them) and that the task of the critic was to expose their often subtle ideological workings. Historical narratives are treated in much the same way, their traditional claim to objectivity undermined by the epistemological skepticism at the heart of these new methodologies. Indeed, generic boundaries to a great extent have vanished in this context; texts are texts, and they all participate in fabricating the discursive worlds that we inhabit.

The Palestinian-American critic Edward Said first brought these innovations to bear on the study of imperialism. The 1978 publication of his massively influential book *Orientalism* could fairly be said to mark the beginning of postcolonial studies as they are currently understood and of postcoloniality as a critical position defined by the ways in which its analysis of empire and especially of colonial and postcolonial texts, broadly construed, is informed by the intellectual currents outlined above. Said’s great contribution was to show how the “knowledge” that the imperial powers formulated about their intended or actual colonial subjects and then articulated and perpetuated in various kinds of texts became a tool to justify European colonial domination of other lands and peoples. He was concerned specifically with what is now called the Middle East and with the role of the discourse created by western academic Orientalists in rationalizing European hegemony; McLeod has a useful schematization of the main features of this discourse, beginning with its signature binary structures (McLeod 2000, 39–46). What is new

here is the movement of the critic away from the social, political, and economic *Realien* of the imperial order to a stress on the creation and maintenance of empire as a textual process, where it is texts and systems of representation, including stereotypes, that construct the world(view) that makes empire possible.

To be sure, there had been precursors to Said who explored the ways in which empires “colonize imaginations” (McLeod 2000, 22), most notably the Martiniquan psychiatrist and anti-colonial thinker and activist Frantz Fanon, whose experiences under French colonial rule inspired his work on the debilitating psychological effects of colonialism on the colonized (in *The Wretched of the Earth* and especially *Black Skin, White Masks*). But Said’s application to the colonial context of Foucauldian ideas about the relationship between the production and control of knowledge (or “knowledge”) and the exercise of power, along with his foregrounding of literary materials as conduits of that knowledge, brought a strikingly new perspective to his work. It soon inspired the academic sub-field of colonial discourse analysis, whose primary object is to tease out the ways in which texts (and this could include, for example, institutions and cultural practices) underwrite imperial/colonial projects by naturalizing the structures of thought that make them seem reasonable, even necessary. This mode of reading seeks to dismantle the textual foundations of those projects, or as the title of a relevant study puts it, to “de-scribe Empire” (Tiffin and Lawson 1994), although paradoxically imperial texts themselves often do some of that work, as we shall see. It is here that a “postcolonial approach” to Tacitus would begin.

2. Postcolonial Classics

Given that the Roman empire was the mother of all empires, it is no surprise that even classicists have been drawn into this critical movement. Some might doubt the commensurability of ancient and modern empires in the light of conventional wisdom among historians of the modern era that imperialism proper is by definition connected with the imperatives of industrial capitalism; such a narrow view of empire could in turn raise questions about whether critical theories developed from modern texts can legitimately be applied to the literature of Roman imperialism. This is not, however, just a question of ancient versus modern. As Said’s critics pointed out, even modern empire was not monolithic but showed as many variations as there were national cultures among the colonizers; regional and cultural

identities among the colonized; and even race, class, and gender divisions within both groups. Still, when we look beyond the enormous variation in imperial institutions and practices, past and present, we find a remarkable consistency in the rhetorical systems that have underpinned them all. As Webster puts it, “modern colonial writing and classical texts ... encode essentially similar discourses.... ancient and modern colonial discourse share a discursive similarity which renders them contextually analogous” (Webster 1994, 2; on the ancient versus modern question see also Webster 1996a, 8–9, “But isn’t it a-historical?”). Indeed, the assumption of shared discursive structures underlies the growing postcolonial turn in classical scholarship concerned with various cultural and literary artifacts of Roman imperial rule, and will, I think, be further validated in this essay.

As with studies of modern texts, it takes more than a factual enumeration of imperial preoccupations and self-justifications and even more than an implied critique of them to make writing about empire’s ancient incarnations postcolonial. Many years ago Charlesworth (1926), for example, identified a “fear of the Orient in the Roman Empire,” while Hammond (1948), somewhat later, exhaustively catalogued the justifications for imperial expansion offered in a sweeping range of Greek and Latin texts; Brunt (1978) continued in this vein with a closer look at the *laus imperii* of Cicero and Caesar. While all these studies marshal important evidence that could easily be incorporated into a postcolonial approach, they lack the feature that would make them rise to the level of postcolonial criticism: a systematic analysis of how a pervasive network of cultural knowledge constructed around colonizer and colonized is used as a basis for building and maintaining imperial hierarchies. More recent scholarship has come closer without fully or perhaps self-consciously developing this angle. Isaac (2004), for example, in the second chapter (“Conquest and Imperialism”) of his magisterial study of the Greco-Roman origins of racism, discusses Greek and Roman ideas about the allegedly innate attributes of “barbarians” from Aristotle onward that were invoked to justify their subjugation. Similarly Mattern (1999), under the rubric “The Image of the World,” describes how the ethnographic stereotypes transmitted in the literary education of Roman elites influenced their decisions about imperial strategy. Yet both, especially Isaac, are essentially descriptive, and neither contextualizes their observations in a larger theoretical and terminological (some would say jargon-laden) framework derived from critiques of modern colonialism that are in turn grounded in poststructuralist ideas about the primacy of language in constructing reality. Mattern, for example, seems to be thinking more in terms of

individual attitudes than the insidious tentacles of culturally generated knowledge.

In the area of specialized author studies, two books about the *Aeneid* illustrate again how non-postcolonial scholarship can engage with quintessentially postcolonial issues, as well as how postcolonial perspectives and formulations have infiltrated relatively traditional literary criticism over time. In the first instance, Hardie's *Cosmos and Imperium* (1986) explores the poem's elaborate correlation between the cosmic order and the Augustan imperial system, a theme that clearly could be treated in a postcolonial way, but the word "discourse" is never uttered, and on the whole the study is cast too much in terms of authorial intent to be consistent with postcolonialism's interrogation of humanistic models of the self, which it inherited from poststructuralism. On the other hand, Quint (1993) in *Epic and Empire* shines a different light on imperialist determinism. His discussion of epic as a vehicle for promulgating belief in imperial dominance by historically favored peoples is marked by postcolonial touches such as his reading of Vergil's description of the battle of Actium in *Aeneid* 8 (675–728), which is clearly indebted to Said's Orientalist scheme, and his consideration of the "voices of resistance" emanating from the "colonized 'other,'" which articulate "alternative accounts vying with (the) official version of history" (Quint 1993, 21–31, 99). As we will see when we come to Tacitus, a focus on resistance and the permeability of imperial constructs is a feature of postcolonial theory after Said, which took issue with the monolithic, irresistible character of his Orientalism.

This survey is in no way meant to suggest that there is anything deficient about any of these studies. On the contrary, each of them is very useful in its own way. My concern is rather to lay out some parameters for a "postcolonial approach" to Tacitus while situating that project in the context of previous work on "Roman colonial discourse" that exemplifies postcolonial criticism, or its absence, in varying degrees. Secondarily, I want to suggest that the line of demarcation is less distinct than might be expected, much as critics of Said pointed out that in many respects he was extending a continuum more than inventing something completely new (see Loomba 1998, 46, 55–56). It is possible, however, to cite classical scholarship that is unambiguously postcolonial in its orientation. One such effort would be Webster and Cooper's *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, published in 1996, whose introduction explicitly states that the papers in the volume employ "analytical tools drawn from post-colonial theory" (Webster 1996a, 1). One of the co-editors identifies the unifying focus of such a collection as the "exploration of colonial cultural politics, the main thrust of which is a critique of the processes

by which ‘knowledge’ about the colonial Other was produced,” in order to “write a new history, which de-centers the dominant self-histories of the West” (Webster 1996a, 6). The volume offers a range of approaches to this task, including discussions of the symbiotic relationship of British and Roman imperialism in the British imperialist imagination: Rome was invoked as a paradigm for British imperial conquest even as British imperial values and institutions were read back onto Rome by scholars and politicians alike (on the former syndrome, see also, for example, Vasunia 2005).

The section of Webster and Cooper most instructive for our purposes is entitled “Writing the Other: Colonial Representation.” Here Webster herself dissects the colonialist underpinning of ostensibly objective ancient ethnographic writing – knowledge – about the Celts, who were, she argues, portrayed as innately bellicose in Latin texts to rationalize Roman territorial ambitions (Webster 1996b; in an earlier article (1994) she had similarly explored Greek and Roman manipulation of myths of origin, another kind of knowledge, to bolster their territorial claims). In the same vein de Souza (1996) deconstructs Roman manifestos against piracy as constituting a discourse that justified expeditions leading to the acquisition of new lands. Like Webster and Cooper, to cite a final example, Habinek (1998) takes a clearly postcolonial approach to Ovid’s exile poetry and its “construction of the imperial subject” in the eighth chapter of his book, *The Politics of Latin Literature*. Here again the crux is representation, specifically the ways in which Ovid’s Tomis is barbarized, again with a heavy deployment of stereotypes from ethnography, in such a way as to make the necessity of Rome’s civilizing presence there inarguable. Habinek lifts his reading above limited notions of individual authorial agenda and into the realm of naturalized and naturalizing cultural discourse that is the ether of postcolonial studies when he frames it in terms of the “text’s embeddedness in its material and social context,” which allows it to “(work) its ideological magic, by making us believe in the inevitability of its own enabling fictions” (Habinek 1998, 166–167).

While the attention of most postcolonial criticism in Classics has perhaps inevitably fallen on the discursive frameworks that undergirded Roman hegemony, some of it has come to the question from the side of the colonized. Several critics, for example, have explored the ways in which modern postcolonial writers have incorporated allusion to Greek and Roman literature and culture in their work, appropriating and refiguring the “master’s” canon as part of their insurgent project of “writing back” to the imperial center (Greenwood and Budelmann in Goff 2005; Hardwick and Gillespie 2007). An even more intriguing possibility casts provincial writers in

the Roman empire itself as precursors to the Salman Rushdies and Derek Walcotts of the contemporary postcolonial world. In particular, the second-century North African novelist and professional sophist Apuleius has been seen as negotiating the contradictions of his complex hybrid identity in his work while questioning whether his Greco-Roman *paideia* and mastery of Latin (his distinctive use itself being a potential tool of resistance) will ever be enough to make him a Roman (Finkelpearl 2007, 2009). The voice of the colonized in Tacitus, by contrast, is necessarily ventriloquized by the colonizer, though in ways that combine with other features of the texts to riddle them with a profound ambivalence toward the imperial project, as we will see.

3. Postcolonial Tacitus

Tacitus has the same incremental history of becoming postcolonial as do other Greek and Latin authors. Questions of empire have always occupied a prominent place in Tacitean scholarship, as the length of Benario's 1991 bibliography of work on the historian's "view of the Empire and the *Pax Romana*" makes clear. That very formulation, however, along with the secondary questions around which Benario organizes his catalogue ("Did Tacitus think the empire was good? Did he think it would survive? What were his views on war and peace?"), signals the conventional approach that marked most scholarship on Tacitus and empire through the time covered by the bibliography (Benario 1991, 3332). There have also been a number of studies examining barbarian "others," usually British or German, in Tacitus, including some that stress the degree to which his reliance on ethnographic convention compromises the value of these portraits as historical documents (for example, Städele 1990). Until more recently, however, discussions of the Tacitean refraction of colonial alterity, like work on his treatment of Roman imperialism as a whole, have lacked any grounding in postcolonial theory that would situate these topics in the context of the historian's articulation of a comprehensive cultural discourse working by stealth to conjure the colonizer's image of the world into being.

Important articles on the *Germania* and the *Agricola* by O'Gorman (1993), Clarke (2001), and Rutledge (2000) mark a significant shift in this regard. O'Gorman was among the first to apply the idea of empire's textuality to Tacitus, arguing that the *Germania* shapes and molds Germany in ways that align the territory with Roman imperial designs, if not accomplishments, through a process of describing and

naming which is the textual analogue to physical subjugation (Dupont 1995 also discusses the axis of geography and politics in the *Germania*). As is often the case with colonial texts, however, an undercurrent pulls against the confident imperialist grain, as the “uncivilized” Germans unexpectedly become models of pristine Roman virtue; this inversion in turn “undermines the identity–difference distinction which informs the ethnographic text” (O’Gorman 1993, 149). Although she herself does not generalize, O’Gorman thus identifies in the *Germania* a tendency that plays out repeatedly in later colonial texts, when metropolitan writers use ethnography in ways that are ethno- and egocentric to work out anxieties about their own cultures. Clarke’s study of the *Agricola* likewise centers on how the text generates knowledge about a territory with provincial potential, in this case Britain, through a process of “intellectual conquest” that lays the groundwork for its material sequel (Clarke 2001, 100). In both these analyses geography, like ethnography, is no disinterested science but rather a facilitator of imperial designs that enables the colonizer to redraw the map in multiple ways simultaneously (in the same vein, Riggsby 2006, 32–45 discusses the correspondence between surveying a land and possessing it in Caesar’s *Galic War*). In the *Agricola*, as in the *Germania*, a subtext splits the surface of the dominant discourse when the British chieftain Calgacus begins to compete with the ostensible Roman hero Agricola as an embodiment of old-fashioned republican values, as Clarke notes. The relocation of traditional Roman ideals to the frontier is in fact a recurrent theme in the Tacitean corpus as a whole; it is one aspect of what Bhabha (1984) calls the “ambivalence of colonial discourse,” which destabilizes its ancient and its modern articulations.

Rutledge makes his postcolonial orientation clear in the subtitle of his article “Tacitus in Tartan: Textual Colonization and Expansionist Discourse in the *Agricola*.” Of these three studies, his involves the most explicit application of a postcolonial theoretical frame, drawn in this case from David Spurr’s book *The Rhetoric of Empire*, whose simple but invaluable contribution was to “identify the basic rhetorical features of (colonial) discourse and to study the ways in which it has been deployed” in modern European colonial texts (Spurr 1993, 1). Rutledge explores how the narrative of the *Agricola* exemplifies a subset of Spurr’s roster of the rhetorical “tropes” (or *topoi* in classical rhetorical terms) that structure colonial discourse generically, arguing forcefully that “the text ... acts as an abettor in the colonial process” (Rutledge 2000, 75). He concentrates on five rhetorical strategies that function as the textual correlates of physical force in this work, including one identified also by O’Gorman and Clarke but not designated there by Spurr’s term “surveillance”: the use of mapping

and description to create, control, and reorient knowledge about a place as a prelude to its physical subjugation. Rutledge also discerns the workings of “negation” (the representation of Britain as a shapeless void and of its people as having no identity or history; it is an empty space there for the taking), “naturalization” (identifying the place and its inhabitants with nature as opposed to culture), “affirmation” (the rhetorical elevation of the colonizer’s institutions and values to justify their hegemony), and “appropriation” (the projection of the colonizer’s rationalizing discourses onto the colonized). The operation of each of these tropes is followed systematically from the beginning to the end of the *Agricola*.

Like the other two critics, Rutledge also sees signs of “internal contradictions and instability within the text,” especially in the form of a coexistent denigration and idealization of the natives (Rutledge 2000, 76), but his ultimate attribution of these contradictions to dramatic and aesthetic factors is unnecessary, given what we know about the intrinsic self-sabotaging tendencies of colonial discourse. Furthermore, his determination to make the text monolithically “pro-Roman” leads him to understate the virtues of Calgacus and the role of this subaltern in the Tacitean critique of contemporary *Roman* culture. This tendency is also evident in his discussion of *Agricola* 21, the famous description of the Romanizing natives and the ultimately debilitating effects of this process, which Rutledge takes as a condemnation of British weakness instead of Roman decadence (for further interpretation of Ag. 21 and the speech of Calgacus at 30–32, see Sailor in this volume). It is possible, to be sure, to see here a hint of the sort of mockery directed toward the unsuccessful colonial “mimic” that is a common feature in modern colonial texts. Such a reading is complicated, however, by the apparently unironic use of *uitia* (vices) for the Roman practices being adopted and by the rueful observation that the Britons thought that they were becoming cultured, when in fact they were only becoming slaves (*idque apud imperitos humanitas uocabatur, cum pars seruitutis esset*, Ag. 21.2). Particulars such as these can be debated; on the whole Rutledge’s exercise is an exemplary application of postcolonial ideas to a Latin text.

What I propose to do in the remainder of this essay is build on these three studies, and especially that of Rutledge, to extend the postcolonial reading of Tacitus to the *Annals* and the *Histories* in addition to the monographs, taking his entire corpus synoptically as a continuous articulation of colonial discourse across genres. Like Rutledge I will rely on the framework that Spurr has provided, but I will expand the list of tropes or rhetorical strategies exemplified in Tacitus and suggest more comparison with modern texts which have

formed the basis of postcolonial theory. Unlike Rutledge, however, I will direct my discussion to the ultimate ambivalence of Tacitean colonial discourse, drawing attention to the manifold sites where it breaks down and collapses under the weight of its own logical inconsistencies and conflicting imperatives. The subtle ambivalence of the discourse toward its own ostensible project, its tendency to “malfunction and short-circuit” and in the process to “generate the possibilities of (its) own critique” (McLeod 2000, 55, 64) have come to be regarded by theorists working with modern texts as defining the discourse as surely as do its brash proclamations of manifest destiny. Bhabha is the critic most identified with this line of analysis, which he developed in the early 1980s in two influential articles that were largely a response to what he viewed as an oversimplifying lack of nuance and a neglect of subversive possibilities in Said’s account.

In these articles Bhabha explored two related features of colonial discourse that inadvertently disrupt its smooth workings as a delivery system for dominant values. The first, which he discusses under the heading of “ambivalence,” hinges on the incompatibility of two fundamental propositions of the discourse: on the one hand the axiom that colonial subjects are essentially and permanently “other,” which is necessary for the self-definition of the colonizer and an important rationale for his imperial overreach, and on the other the idea of a civilizing mission, which rests on the premise that assimilation is possible. When these warring claims come into conflict, they expose the discourse’s logical seams and destabilize the position of the colonized in unsettling ways as he slips and slides between the two poles. Bhabha sees the invocation of stereotypes itself as an attempt to fix the identity and the place of the colonized in the face of the danger that his discursive unmooring represents, but at the same time as a tacit admission that any effort to do so will be futile. The discourse’s ambivalence on these points gives rise to “mimicry,” its second fatal flaw in Bhabha’s reckoning. By this he means the affect of the class of suspect hybrids that colonial situations inevitably produce as living evidence of the discourse’s contradictions. In spite of the stated goal of native acculturation, the off-center resemblance of these assimilating natives to their colonial masters is perceived more as a vague threat than as a sign of success because of the havoc it plays with the discourse’s neat structures and the difficulties it presents in telling friend from foe. The Tacitean narratives channel colonial ambivalence in both of these forms.

In addition the narratives show another kind of tension, also rooted in the conceit of a civilizing mission; in these cases, the conceit collides with the trenchant critique of the colonizer’s own metropolitan culture that is often threaded through colonial texts. One

might expect the champions of cultural imperialism to express pride in the home culture they propose to export, but in many incarnations of colonial discourse enthusiasm for disseminating the culture of the imperial power coexists with a deep alienation from it at another level. This paradox is connected to the essentially conservative voice that animates the discourse, which can recoil from contemporary developments at the imperial center while extolling its traditional values. The dissonance was especially evident under the British empire where, ironically, worries about decay at the center of empire, in large part attributed to the degenerative effects of mass culture and industrial democracy, were expressed in the same quarters that were urging the nation to take up the “White Man’s Burden” to Anglicize the world (see, for example, Edmond 2000). As we have seen, Clarke and O’Gorman, drawing on a long tradition of Tacitean criticism, have touched on the tension between cultural self-idealization and self-doubt in the *Agricola* and the *Germania*, respectively. I would like to flesh out their observations while understanding this syndrome not as a Tacitean idiosyncrasy but as a feature of colonial discourse generically.

Rationalizations of Empire

All of these ambiguities typically lurk behind an apparently solid front of support for the imperial project. As Rutledge indicates, Spurr has analyzed the rhetorical strategies deployed by the modern western powers to justify empire under the heading, or trope, of “affirmation” (Spurr 1993, 109–124). Underneath national variations Spurr detects common patterns of assertion and obfuscation working to create what Boehmer calls a “closed world of imperial belief” whose claims acquire the status of truth through constant reiteration (Boehmer 1995, 43). The assertions that sustain imperial reality regularly involve appeals to a divinely sanctioned order into which the earthly order envisioned by the colonizer conveniently fits. There are appeals as well to the self-evident superiority of his moral system and cultural traditions, which justifies his position as the arbiter of the systems and traditions of others. Declarations of altruism also figure prominently in imperial self-fashioning: territorial appropriation, economic exploitation, and cultural high-handedness are glossed as the benevolent dissemination of the colonizer’s exemplary institutions and values, which are unproblematically equated with universal human ideals. The colonial power is constructed as the selfless agent of an enlightened moral purpose; its actions are principled and it even makes generous efforts to mitigate the chronically self-destructive behaviors of the natives – to save them from themselves.

Under the related rubric of “appropriation,” Spurr observes the extent to which the rhetoric of imperial self-justification presumes to speak for the colonized in the ongoing negotiations between the two sides (Spurr 1993, 28–42). Here colonial activity is imagined as a dutiful response to an appeal for outside intervention from the colonized themselves in the face of their chronic incapacity to manage their own affairs. This rhetorical tendency, in tandem with self-idealization, also gives rise to colonial fantasies in which the unifying power of the imperial center’s institutions erases elsewhere intractable differences and gathers the grateful natives into the fold of civilization. One of the texts invoked by Spurr to illustrate this nexus of rhetorical moves is Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden,” from 1899 (Spurr 1993, 112–114). If this is a predictable choice in this context, there are compelling reasons for it: the poem exemplifies most of these standard strategies of imperial rationalization and in addition shows the sort of self-actualizing repetition (“Take up the white man’s burden,” intoned seven times) that inadvertently exposes the civilizing mission and the colonial project as a whole as a rhetorical construct rather than a natural fact. Spurr notes that such rhetoric tends to intensify at precisely those times when its claims are most under siege, as if the words will have a stabilizing effect on a newly uncooperative reality (Spurr 1993, 121–124).

In the course of expansion abroad during the middle and later republic, a range of justifications for empire was articulated in Roman texts, including the claim that benefits accrue to both sides when barbarians are tamed by a superior civilization; this claim was strengthened by assertions of divine favor toward the Romans that conflated the political and the cosmic orders, lending their rule an air of rightness and inevitability (see Hammond 1948, 115–125; Gruen 1984, 273–287). We can look to Tacitus for an idea of the shape of Roman imperial self-justification in its maturity. The sense of manifest destiny is ubiquitous. For example, he has Agricola, in a speech to his men before the decisive battle, attribute previous Roman successes in Britain to their role in advancing “imperial Rome’s divinely guided greatness,” in Mattingly’s translation (*uirtute et auspiciis imperii Romani*, Ag. 33.2). Similarly, in the *Annals* the general Avitus responds to an incident of German land-grabbing by lecturing the offenders about the necessity to submit to the rule of their betters, into whose power the gods have entrusted all decisions about territorial boundaries and the allotment of resources (*patienda meliorum imperia; id dis ... placitum, ut arbitrium penes Romanos maneret, quid darent quid adimerent*, Ann. 13.56.1). But it is not only Tacitean characters who channel this discourse. At *Germania* 33.2 the historian himself suggests that German inter-tribal warfare is a gift of fortune to aid and abet the

inexorable movement of Rome toward her imperial destiny.

We also hear of the need to habituate colonial subjects to the rule of law and to treat them, when vanquished, with magnanimity – both quintessentially colonialist rhetorical gestures (*Ann.* 12.32.2, the presence of a colony at Camulodunum in Britain is meant to remind native allies of their legal obligations to Rome; *Ann.* 15.31.1, the Parthian prince Tiridates need not fear being treated with arrogance, a practice of foreign powers, not the Romans). Moreover, the occasional native freedom-fighter notwithstanding, resistance to Roman rule is consistently represented as irrational and short-sighted; rebels, regardless of their background and motivation, are routinely dismissed as traitors, hotheads, criminals, and ingrates (*Ann.* 3.40.2, Gallic sedition spearheaded by those already prone to violence and crime; *Hist.* 4.37.3, the Treviri sully their past service to Rome by rebelling; *Hist.* 4.67.2, revolting Gauls begin to “return to reason,” *resipiscere*). In contrast to such trouble-makers are set the “good” natives, characterized with “appropriating” strokes that impute to them an uncomplicated embrace of Roman values. Thus, for example, the faithful German and Gallic provincials Segestes, Flavus, and Auspex take great pride in their identification with Rome and in their speeches urge the benefits of submission on their restive compatriots (*Ann.* 1.58, 2.9–10; *Hist.* 4.69.1).

The most concentrated articulation of the rhetoric of imperial self-justification comes in a speech given at *Histories* 4.73–74 by the Roman general Cerialis to Gallic peoples who had joined in the revolt of Julius Civilis in 69–70 CE. This appeal pulls out all the rhetorical stops to reassert a “right” worldview that has been destabilized by actual events. Cerialis invokes eight hundred years of Roman *disciplina* and *fortuna* as a disincentive to resist her authority and claims that the gods themselves would balk at a Roman withdrawal, for this would only leave a void into which chaos would once again rush (*Hist.* 4.74.3). He insists that Rome is a selfless, benevolent force sacrificing her own blood and treasure to bring peace and justice to the troubled regions of the world, acting only at the behest of the inhabitants (*Hist.* 4.73.2). Cerialis further alludes to the idea of the beneficent power of the colonizer’s institutions to bring the colonized into the fold of civilization. Conquerors or conquered, our interests are common, he tells the Gauls, if only you would devote yourselves to the capital city that we all possess by the same right (*Hist.* 4.74.4). He insists that it is the German ringleaders of the revolt who are the true imperialists, using the watchword of *libertas* to screen their *libido* and greed (*avaritia*), and adds that no one has ever sought domination without thus twisting these very words (*Hist.* 4.73.3). Some have seen here an ironic commentary on Roman imperial modes of rationalization

(Bastomsky 1988), but this view would be difficult to square with the fact that the historian never, in his own voice, questions the Roman right to rule others or the necessity of putting down provincial revolts; in spite of his hostility to individual emperors and his reservations about the principate as an institution, he appears to regard an imposed *pax Romana* as a self-evident good in these texts. Nevertheless, how passages such as this are to be read must remain to a great extent an open question in Tacitus, where, as we will see, colonial ambivalence takes many forms and doubt can bubble through the most confident façade.

Othering/Gendering

Working hand-in-hand with “affirmation” to build rationalizing textual support for imperialist activity is a rhetorical strategy that Spurr calls “debasement,” in which the colonial subject is constructed as the dark antithesis of the colonizer and of the elevated cultural and moral values that he imagines himself to embody. The basic rhetorical features of cultural “othering” are by now well known, as is its function as a “mechanism of self-legitimation” (Boehmer 1995, 80) that says more about the identity anxieties of the otherer than it does about the reality of the othered. “Debasement” of others did not begin with imperialism, of course; in its ancient and its modern incarnations, it was well developed in other contexts before the twin movements of imperial expansion and colonial settlement provided fertile ground for its definitive cultivation in colonial discourse. As Webster observes, “late republican Rome ... took the Greek discourse of the barbarian and turned it into something specifically imperial – a discourse which justified territorial expansion” (Webster 1996b, 116). Likewise Boehmer, in sketching the background of the “feminized colonial other” so common in modern discourse, explains how the figure of the colonized was simply added to the list of terms against which elite male European agents had long defined themselves (women, servants, beasts), but in a way that “subsumed within itself those other significations of difference” to produce a foil simultaneously womanish, servile, and animalistic and thus crying out all the more for salutary discipline and subjugation (Boehmer 1995, 81).

Spurr illustrates the workings of debasement under colonialism with British texts of the high empire, in which it is at base a “failure to impose a series of distinctions necessary for modern civility” that is projected onto native peoples, setting the stage for European intervention (Spurr 1993, 81). The outlines of this process are evident even in texts that most would not identify as colonial. Darwin, for example, in his journal (1839) and in *The Descent of Man* (1871),

suggests that the inferiority of primitive peoples is shown by their habitual confounding of spheres kept firmly separate by Europeans: work and leisure, public and private, reason and passion. Any violation of the integrity of the body, the symbolic focus of so many generalized fears about identity, causes particular consternation. Darwin demonstrates this when he expresses dismay at a group of South American Indians who drink to excess and then vomit all over themselves; as Spurr notes in explaining Darwin's reaction, "the defilement of the self's clean and proper body ... marks the transgression of a crucial boundary between inside and out" (Spurr 1993, 81). A more overtly colonial text shows how the perception of savages trampling on boundaries crucial to European consciousness has the power to provoke more vehement responses, in this case from a young Winston Churchill, covering a British campaign on the Indian frontier for the London *Daily Telegraph* in 1897. His discovery that the enemy had disinterred and mutilated the bodies of native troops who had died fighting for the British causes him to unleash a screed whose ultimate rhetorical effect is to exclude the offenders from membership in the human race. Churchill's tirade is animated by his sense that crucial distinctions have collapsed – between sacred and profane, human and animal, life and death (Spurr 1993, 82, with full quotes from Churchill's dispatches).

A common form of debasement is feminization, which Spurr discusses under the rubric of "eroticization." What is interesting about this trope is its ability to persist in the absence of any charge of effeminacy in the usual sense, even where a primary impression conveyed in the representation of uncivilized men is one of primitive virility. Yet lurking behind the beards and bellicosity (in the case of the Germans and other Tacitean barbarians) is the malign specter of the feminine, visible in the identification of this class of savage as well with the "female" principles of excess and lack of self-restraint. Spurr cites Kipling's account of the British response to a native revolt in the Sudan in 1897 as an especially telling example of the gendering of colonial discourse. In "The Riddle of Empire" Kipling writes approvingly of the force brought to bear on the rebels:

It was an hysteria of blood and fanaticism; and precisely as an hysterical woman is called to her senses by a dash of cold water, so ... the land was reduced to sanity by applied death on such a scale as the murderers ... at their most unbridled could scarcely have dreamed.

(Quoted in Spurr 1993, 172)

Here the colonizer is the epitome of good order and cool male reason, forced to apply corrective discipline to an out-of-control

colonial other – not girly-men (they are “murderers and torturers”), but coded as female all the same by their “unbridled” destructive emotionalism. In one stroke colonial relations are mapped onto conventional gender hierarchies and the “natural” power differential imputed to them. It is worth noting, too, that this binary formulation makes the colonizer a champion of culture while the colonized is a wild creature of traditionally female nature, here understood as “bad.” How nature is to be valorized, however, is one of the major areas of slippage in colonial discourse. It slides between negative and positive poles according to the immediate rhetorical needs of the speaker, disparaged when the focus is on justifying the spread of its opposite “civilization,” as it is here, but idealized when the prism turns to anxiety about the health of metropolitan culture, and erstwhile “murderers and torturers” are transformed, sometimes within the same text, into that counter-type to hypercivilized decadence, the noble savage.

In the Tacitean corpus there are certainly places where the northern barbarians and remote, relatively new provincials are described in neutral terms or where the picture of their interactions with Rome suggests something of the complexity that could characterize actual relations between provincials and the imperial center, and native and Roman culture, in the empire near the frontiers. But when the imperative of imperial self-justification supersedes other concerns in framing a scene, it is the unregenerate, debased other who takes center stage as surely as he does in Churchill and Kipling. The Germans especially are cast in this role; their unruliness and lack of self-restraint is displayed in everything from disorder and cowardice in battle to utter indolence on the home front. The picture of Teutonic sloth in the face of possible Roman attack at *Annals* 1.50 is typical: while the Romans organize their assault, the Germans continue their habitual revelry unchecked, posting no sentries but instead drinking until they pass out. Tacitus grades German military prowess by the degree to which they subject their natural wildness to Roman-style discipline (*Ann.* 2.45.2; *Ger.* 30.2–3) and elsewhere deflates their bellicose posturing with accounts of shameful flight from battle (*Ann.* 1.68.5, Arminius abandons his men to slaughter; *Ann.* 2.14.3). At home the same Germans who in another rhetorical register can exemplify good domestic order spend most of their time in idleness, drinking, quarreling, and gambling while the women do all the work (*Ger.* 15.1, 22.1. 23, 24.2). When the negative side of barbarian alterity is foregrounded, perfidy, superstition, and gratuitous cruelty become standard attributes. German wartime atrocities come to light early in Tiberius’ reign when the Roman army comes upon the site of Varus’ defeat in the Teutoburg Forest some six

years earlier (*Ann.* 1.61). There they find evidence that torture and execution – even human sacrifice – had been mixed with religious rites, the sort of thing that the reader is to imagine Germanicus having in mind in the next book when he attacks the Germans’ disregard for divine and human law (*Ann.* 2.14.3).

When barbarians and Roman legions are arrayed against each other in battle, the whole complex of negative values that the first group is made to bear can be concentrated in especially clear and concise ways. At *Annals* 14.30, when Suetonius Paulinus lands his forces on the island of Mona (Anglesey) where fugitive British rebels have found a haven, the Romans encounter a “motley line” (*diuersa acies*, 14.30.1) of warriors supported by frenzied females and inscrutable rituals in an atmosphere of general disorder: women brandishing torches dash about like Furies (*in modum Furiarum*) while Druid priests mutter cryptic imprecations. Although the women are presumably in the minority on the front line, the enemy force is still constructed as “fanatic and female” (*muliebre et fanaticum*, 14.30.2), in an anticipation of the strategic conflation of Kipling. After defeating the Britons, the Romans find in their sacred groves gruesome evidence of the same sort of “savage superstition” (*saeuis superstitionibus*, 14.30.3) that the Germans had left behind in the Teutoburg Forest. When Paulinus prepares to do battle with Boudicca a few chapters later, the contrast between the discipline and good order of the Roman army and the chaotic rushing about of the natives is again stressed (*Ann.* 14.34.2). The deficiencies attributed to the barbarians are the deficiencies traditionally assigned to women – disorder, irrationality, lack of self-control; the presence of a female ruler strengthens this association. At this “official” level of colonial discourse, debased savages are, like women, slaves to a dangerous nature that needs taming by the constraints of civilization.

The Anxieties of Empire: The Challenge of Hybridity

For all the imperial swagger and ethnocentric paternalism, however, the seams of Tacitean colonial discourse show; its logical and conceptual gaps are consistent with the built-in tendency of colonial texts as a whole to be tentative in spite of themselves, as their subtexts “establish distance from the ideologies they seem to be reproducing” on the surface (Porter 1994, 160). One site where colonial ambivalence gathers heavily is around the figure of the assimilating native, the “hybrid” of Bhabha’s critique. Later European colonial literature teems with suspicion of cooperative colonial subjects, whose

apparent devotion to the colonizer's values could generate as much anxiety as demonstrated resistance. Much of the discomfort grew out of a dim awareness that such figures represented the collision point of two intractably conflicting premises of the discourse: the claim of a civilizing mission on the one hand and on the other the colonizer's need to perpetuate mechanisms of self-definition – in other words, his need for the other to remain other in the end. Caught between these two imperatives of the discourse, the colonized was forced into an untenable position in a nebulous “in-between state” where he coalesced as “neither one thing nor the other, neither civilized nor savage, but (was) strangely without definition” (Spurr 1993, 84). Furthermore, attempts to mimic Europeans were often met not with approval but with a mockery that acted to reassure the colonizer that he himself was the authentic vessel of civilization. All the colonized could ever become was a pale simulacrum of the real thing; he was, as Spurr puts it in his discussion of Kipling's attitudes toward “domesticated Indians,” a “child of Frankenstein, both ‘Ours’ and irremediably ‘Other’ ” (Spurr 1993, 85). Ultimately, though, it was the colonizer who was mocked as the “monster” that he himself created wrought havoc on the tidy boundaries of his world and exposed the fundamental failure of its legitimating discourses (see also Boehmer 1995, 81–82; and seminally, Bhabha).

In the Roman empire the dynamics appear to have been rather different. Romans needed others too, but they did not necessarily consign them to perpetual alterity, and who played the role of other was constantly being reformulated with the empire's shifting boundaries. The acceptance of successive groups of provincials as “naturalized” Romans in the course of the empire's expansion was predicated upon a belief that real assimilation was possible, that civilization could be learned. In contrast to their Anglo-European heirs, whose pronouncements in this area were hobbled by contradictions, and to the Greeks, who tended toward an essentialist position that regarded the distinction between barbarian and Hellene as based in race (*ethnos*) and fixed (Woolf 1998, 58–59), the Romans viewed Romanness as being rooted more in culture than in nature, and accordingly their colonial system offered pathways to citizenship that allowed outsiders to be transformed into insiders over time. Even as the “secret of empire – that an emperor could be made elsewhere than at Rome” (*Hist.* 1.4.2) – had been revealed in the turmoil of 68 CE, so by the early second century the era had long since passed when Romans were produced only in the city of Rome or even in Italy. Tacitus himself, his father-in-law Agricola, and the emperor Trajan were all hybrid figures in the sense that they came from elite provincial families in Gaul and Spain, but by now their Romanness

was a settled matter.

Despite the fluidity of this category over time, however, in any given period there were Romans, born or made, and there were others, and there were contact zones where the distinction between them was a matter of urgent negotiation. In the early empire the northern frontiers, including relatively new and sometimes volatile provinces like Britain, comprised one such zone. Here generic colonial anxieties about ambiguous provincial hybrids came into play, including uncertainty about their location on the scale of cultural identity, worries that their domestication could not be trusted, and concerns that the process of Romanization would backfire when the skills it imparted were turned against the Romans themselves. Thus, in Tacitus' accounts of events in these regions we often find a pointed juxtaposition of exemplary loyal subalterns, prescriptively rendered, and tenuously assimilated backsliders whose veneer of *Romanitas* is cast off at the first opportunity as they revert to their violent barbarian selves: the pairing of the conciliatory Gaul Julius Auspex with the incendiary Julius Valentinus, for example, in a sequence of scenes from the Batavian revolt (*Hist.* 4.68.5–69, 70.5) and of the “good” Germans Segestes and Flavus with the rabble-rousing rebel Arminius (*Ann.* 1.55, 57–59, 2.9–10) – although the picture of Arminius itself is not without ambiguities (see below).

But it is Julius Civilis, the mastermind of the Batavian revolt, who best exemplifies the figure of the unsettling hybrid in Tacitus, especially in the way that any attempt to pin down his identity only opens out onto more ambiguities. A prince of the Batavi, a Germanic people historically friendly to Rome, he was also a Roman citizen. In spite of those ties, Civilis (according to Tacitus) took advantage of the power vacuum that followed the death of Nero to launch a revolt against Roman rule in 69–70 CE, enlisting the support of his own Batavians along with various “free” German peoples and two Gallic tribes. He appears to have had in mind the establishment of a sort of Germano-Gallic empire that he himself would rule, though Tacitus suggests that he initially disguised this intention by pretending that his movements were to support Vespasian against Vitellius in their struggle for the principate (*Hist.* 4.13.2). The Tacitean account of these events occupies long stretches of the *Histories* (4.12–37, 54–79; 5.14–26), and it is difficult for the reader to finish it without a nagging sense of unanswered questions. The narrative leaves room for different and often conflicting readings of Civilis' motives, aims, and loyalties, which repeatedly cloud over and shift just when they seem to have stabilized. Is he driven primarily by private grievances against the Romans (suggested at 4.13.1 and 32.2), personal ambition, or nationalist aspirations? Is he truly making common cause with his

Gallic and German allies, or is he using them for his own ends? What is the degree of his engagement with Roman factional conflict? Has he actually set his sights on becoming *Roman* emperor? What is he really up to? But perhaps more important, who is he? Roman or other? Civilized or barbarian? His identity will not stand still. As Haynes puts it, “*Civilis* both is and is not assimilable as one of *us*”; he is “the space that deconstructs the boundaries that separate ‘self’ from ‘other’ ... (thus) undermining Roman identity” (Haynes 2003, 148–149; on *Civilis*, see also Master in this volume).

On the one hand a sinister undercurrent of reawakened barbarism runs through the account of the revolt beginning with its leader, whose rites and vows are characterized as *barbarus* (*Hist.* 4.15.1, 61.1) and whose inborn nature is “savage” (*saevitia ingenii*, 4.63.1); who violates the rules of war by handing over Roman prisoners to his son for target practice (4.61.1) and spews boilerplate talk about freedom and slavery that connects him with other Tacitean wild men (*Hist.* 4.14.2–3, 17, 32.2–3). Yet even this picture is left open to the reader’s interpretation. Has *Civilis* really gone native again, or is the author simply projecting his anxieties about that possibility into his account? Alternatively, are we perhaps to understand *Civilis*’ “barbaric” behavior as an elaborate ruse, which Tacitus may or may not have seen through? Haynes sees the rebel as more Roman than the Romans, especially in his astute grasp of the workings of power; he “appears to play rather than be a barbarian” (Haynes 2003, 148) in an act calculated to win over the Germans to advancing the cause of his own political aggrandizement. In his Tacitean incarnation, *Civilis* certainly has a capacity for duplicity, as he demonstrates when he hides his vision of German ascendancy from his Gallic allies (*Hist.* 4.61.1) just as he had earlier masked his disloyalty to Rome by posing as a Flavian partisan. But in Tacitus, as in other colonial writers who have a tortured love–hate relationship with their own societies, dissimulation is not just a stereotypical trait of debased savages; it can also be a marker of decadence at the imperial center. Is duplicity in *Civilis*’ primitive blood, or did he learn it from his colonial masters? Is his deeper nature simply reasserting itself, or is he a product of the Roman system for better and for worse? It is as if Tacitus himself is unable to decide, and the picture is further unsettled by the wholesale breakdown of boundaries in the *Histories* between Roman and barbarian, civil conflict and foreign war (see Master 2008). *Civilis* stands out from the chaos as a prime emblem of the capacity of the hybrid figures inevitably produced by colonialism to throw the orderly workings of its discourses into confusion.

The Anxieties of Empire: Cycles of Rise and Decline

A very different kind of tension in colonial texts grows out of the tendency of civilizations advanced enough to command empires also to have reached a point of widespread metropolitan malaise and self-doubt. An apparently uncritical cultural and political jingoism has often existed uncomfortably alongside fears about moral and social decline at home in the literary output of high imperial cultures, whose brooding about their own internal degeneration revived the inveterate figure of the noble savage in a colonial refraction that functions as a kind of inverted *Doppelgänger* to the debased colonial other. Discussing this figure under the trope of “idealization,” Spurr observes that in keeping with the deep and persistent ethnocentrism of colonial discourse, even rhetorical moves that idealize colonial others are really about “us,” so to speak, involving as they do the colonizer’s appropriation of native peoples to mediate his own cultural anxieties. “Far from being a gesture which turns its back on the West in order to accept some alternative mode of being,” he writes, the noble savage becomes “yet one more term in Western culture’s dialogue with itself” (Spurr 1993, 128). Spurr’s texts range from the proto-colonial (Montaigne) to the neo-colonial (contemporary journalism), but they all generate their own historically specific versions of the savage as ethical paradigm, an imaginary foil to all that is perceived as having gone wrong at the heart of civilization (Spurr 1993, 125–140).

What has gone wrong can be inferred through a principle of opposition from the virtues regularly attributed to now exalted natives and their societies: a natural sense of justice, a constitutional inability to deceive, exemplary sexual *mores* (which oscillate between self-restraint and free love, depending on whether the malady at home is diagnosed as decadent promiscuity or bourgeois inhibition), and an ethical and psychological integrity untainted by compromise between the “true” self and the demands of society. The noble savage lives in a state of perfect freedom, especially freedom from crippling social constraints that would distort his naturally virtuous character. Whereas the guiding claim of a civilizing mission posits nature as a destructive force that needs taming, in this rhetorical inversion civilization carries within itself the potential to debilitate and corrupt, while nature and the natural, whatever that might mean, become the remedy for this syndrome. The noble savage is an antitype to degenerate civilized man, enervated by metropolitan hyper-refinement and bound up in a straitjacket of stifling social artifice. At the same time he is a figure of cultural nostalgia, because the qualities projected onto him as his own are also the qualities imagined as pervading his

fabricator's own culture in its pristine golden age before the rot, imperial or otherwise, began to set in.

Apparently unbeknownst to most postcolonial critics, the pedigree of the noble savage reaches much farther back than the pre- and proto-colonial iterations produced by the European Enlightenment. By Tacitus' time the figure was already deeply rooted in the Greco-Roman cultural and literary tradition, as was what Spurr calls its "narcissistic and therapeutic" use (Spurr 1993, 42) to make sense of changing *mores* in Greek and Roman societies (for a survey of the noble savage in antiquity, see Lovejoy and Boas 1935, 287–367). Furthermore, just as the debased other preexisted both ancient and modern colonial discourses but was drawn into them as a uniquely relevant term, so the established figure of the noble savage was adapted to colonial uses, and its deployment in ancient imperial texts, including those of Tacitus, marks the beginning of this process. Like their counterparts in later colonial literature, the idealized barbarians in Tacitus *qua* social critic (as opposed to the apologist for empire) are systematically constructed as counter-types to the social and moral dysfunction thought to lie at the heart of empire now that the world's masters have abandoned the republican virtues that first made them great.

It has long been recognized that this is an important function of the Germans in the *Germania* (see O'Gorman 1993, 135 n. 2), in spite of the debased alterity that runs along another thread of the narrative; as McLeod observes, it is a paradox of colonial discourse that "cross-currents of 'Orientalist' and 'counter-Orientalist' thinking can exist simultaneously within a single text" (McLeod 2000, 51). Thus, the Germans are without guile and incapable of dissimulation (*Ger.* 22.3), in stark contrast to the denizens of the Julio-Claudian court depicted in the *Annals*, where studied artificiality is a way of life. At least among those Germans uncorrupted by contact with Roman commerce, gold and silver have no value and usury has yet to be invented (*Ger.* 5.3, 26.1). It is especially in the areas of family life and sexual morality, however, that German exemplarity shines (*Ger.* 18–20). A premium is placed on female chastity, and flirtation and seduction, favorite pastimes of metropolitan sophisticates, are unheard of (*Ger.* 19). It is considered a crime (*flagitium*) to limit the number of children born into a family, and once born they are raised by their own mothers instead of being handed over to wet-nurses and slaves (*Ger.* 19.2–20.1, cf. *Dial.* 28–29, where Tacitus has Messalla complain about this very practice in modern Roman child-rearing). Finally, boy children are not turned into sissies by over-refined education (*Ger.* 20.1–2); the high cultural concern betrayed here with reviving a softening Roman masculinity is also reflected in the approving mention of the punishment of male sexual deviants (*Ger.* 12.1).

Outside the *Germania*'s ethnographic focus on domestic customs and social institutions, Tacitus' northern barbarians, virtually all male because they are now acting in the public sphere, most frequently appear in situations of conflict between their people and agents of Rome, and when their exemplary side is foregrounded, it is their martial vigor and proud sense of integrity that come through. The British king Caratacus refuses to grovel before his Roman conquerors (*Ann.* 12.36.3–37.3), and Arminius himself, although he elsewhere functions as a negative exemplum, can swashbuckle his way through battles to the apparent admiration of the narrator (*Ann.* 2.17.4–5). Above all, the barbarian warriors of the north are characterized by their love of freedom and hatred of slavery, by which they mean submission to foreign rule, and this is where more traditional therapeutic uses of the noble savage shade most evidently into colonial discourse. In his work Tacitus has a parade of rambunctious German and British leaders deliver speeches containing trenchant critiques of Roman rule, which is equated with slavery not only in the obvious political sense but in the moral sense of slavery to Rome's seductive culture of pleasure (Arminius, Caratacus, and Boudicca at *Ann.* 2.15, 12.34, and 14.35 respectively, and Calgacus at *Ag.* 30–32; Boudicca is both transgressive in her mannish behavior and exemplary in the way she puts Roman men, and especially Nero, to shame).

There are, of course, good reasons not to take these barbarians at their word, but the overarching thematics of slavery and freedom in the *Annals* at least, where the Senate is consistently derided for its willing servitude to unworthy *principes*, make it difficult not to read some authorial sympathy here (for more negative views of barbarian versions of *libertas* in Tacitus see, for example, Rives 1999, 62–63 and Rutledge 2000, 86–90). Furthermore, the historian himself appears to endorse the correlation of Roman culture with decadence and moral enervation at *Agricola* 21, where his essential cultural pessimism overpowers the hagiographical and “affirming” imperative of the project at hand. Here *luxuria* is represented as a perverted implement of Roman rule, in the suggestion that *Agricola* promotes Romanization specifically to habituate the Britons to metropolitan pleasures which will dull their edge and make them docile – in fact, make them slaves (*cum pars servitutis esset*, *Ag.* 21.2). To be sure, the idea that urban civilization is a mixed blessing with the power to destroy moral fiber was conventional in ancient ethnography (see Lovejoy and Boas 1935, 117–152). When it surfaces in colonial contexts where the question of “civilization's” effects is more than abstract, however, it acquires a sharp new dimension and moreover creates one of colonial discourse's most glaring areas of ambivalence as it collides with bracing talk about a civilizing mission.

This collision produces another double-edged figure, whom Spurr identifies as a staple in modern colonial literature but who also has precursors in Tacitus. In this scheme, situated within the larger trope of affirmation, the aristocratic colonizer is constructed as a natural ruler whose nobility and inherited virtues entitle him to hold sway over the less advanced peoples whom he encounters in the parts of the world that he appropriates for himself. This idealized, knightly figure is the product of an upper-class nostalgia that casts him as the last hope for a “twilight revival of aristocratic values,” enacted on the frontiers of empire now that forces of change (in the British case, industrialization, capitalism, and democracy) have destroyed the traditional order in the imperial center (Spurr 1993, 116). Spurr draws on texts by Karen Blixen and Evelyn Waugh to illustrate this colonial ethos. In *Out of Africa* (1937) Blixen represents her friends, the Englishmen Finch-Hatton and Cole, as poignantly out of step with their own time: “theirs was an earlier England,” she writes, “a world which no longer existed.” Likewise Waugh, in *Remote People* (1931), describes British settlers in East Africa as “respectable Englishmen, out of sympathy with their own age ... (who) wish to transplant and perpetuate a habit of life traditional to them, which England has ceased to accommodate” (quoted in Spurr 1993, 115–116).

Clearly the discourse takes a deeply reactionary stance here, staking out colonized lands as a space where aristocrats can continue to live as though modernity, with its leveling tendencies and vulgar sensibilities, had never happened (Waugh’s picture of this type may be satiric, but that does not cancel out his sympathy with their complaints about the modern world). In addition to a revived and pure form of honor and courage, the chivalric colonizer can practice a kind of aristocratic magnanimity that includes kindness, albeit paternalistic, toward the natives, not only because it is the gentlemanly thing to do but also because in this equation the natives, being innocent of civilization, are innocent too of its depredations and so are more kindred in spirit to the old-fashioned English nobleman than is the riff-raff back home (in other words, they are another articulation of the noble savage). Thus, this figure represents another point where a major tension of the discourse is concentrated; it is unapologetically imperialistic at one level, but this chauvinism is seriously undermined by the strain of alienation from the colonizer’s own society that runs through it at another.

The type of the displaced aristocrat who escapes intolerable social and political change on the home front and uses the “empty” space of the frontier to reenact the traditional values of his class is a structuring device in the imperial narratives of Tacitus as well. Agricola, Germanicus, and Corbulo are not colonizers or settlers in the

sense of Waugh's expatriates, but rather generals working to secure the frontiers with the expectation of returning to Rome when the task is completed (Germanicus in *Ann.* 1–2; Corbulo in *Ann.* 13–15). Still, they are imagined as lonely, anachronistic figures, out of step with their contemporaries and out of place in the imperial center with its pernicious “modern” trends. At the edges of the empire – on the British, German, and Parthian frontiers – they find a field where they can practice the republican virtues that have long since fallen out of fashion in the capital, without fear of interference from a depraved *princeps*, his corrupt court, and the ascendant mob.

Military prowess naturally heads the list of lost archaic virtues brought back to life in the person of these heroes. In this area Agricola is relentlessly energetic, setting an example by marching in the front ranks, collecting his forces for another campaign instead of taking a winter break, and showing resourcefulness and perseverance in finding a way to cross to Anglesey. In the climactic battle of his career, he is the model of calm comportment under duress (*Ag.* 18, 20.2, 37). Germanicus handles a legionary revolt with courage and psychological acumen (see his speech to the troops at *Ann.* 1.42–43). The admiration he earns from his men is made clear when, moving among them in disguise before battle with the Germans, he hears them praise his “nobility, grace, patience, and courtesy” (*nobilitatem ... decorem ... patientiam, comitatem*, *Ann.* 2.13.1), a catalogue of old-fashioned virtues that is echoed after his death in the East, when not only his grief-stricken provincial subjects but foreign nations and kings remember that he was “courteous toward allies, gentle toward enemies, venerable in appearance and speech” (*Ann.* 2.72.2). Corbulo is the same type, binding his soldiers to himself by sharing in their labors while making it clear that slackers will be disciplined; he is humane but demanding, a prudent and fearless leader (for example, at *Ann.* 13.35.4, 14.24.1, 15.12).

Other vignettes spotlight other virtues. In the early part of his stay in Britain when others would have devoted their energies to “empty display and official obligations” (*quod tempus alii per ostentationem et officiorum ambitum transigunt*, *Ag.* 18.5), Agricola works to put an end to the abuses that had characterized previous administrations, making an effort to be “attentive to the feelings of the province” (*animorum prouinciae prudens*, *Ag.* 19.1). The image of Germanicus in triumph after his northern campaigns foregrounds not only his noble appearance but the five children who share his chariot, a nod to the old-fashioned fecundity that had been disastrously on the wane, according to the moralists, since the late republic (*Ann.* 2.41.3). Corbulo is represented as being in crucial ways more in sympathy with barbarian kinglets than he is with his fellow Romans. Of all the

Romans sent their way, he alone is trusted by the Parthians. His meeting with Tiridates as orchestrated by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.28–30) carries strong suggestions of a mutual respect grounded in the shared values of honor, courage, loyalty, generosity to guests – the very values that mark Corbulo as an anachronism in the capital. Like Finch-Hatton and the African chieftains, Corbulo and Tiridates understand each other. Moreover, each Roman figure is matched with a foil in the form of a “bad” emperor (Domitian for Agricola, Tiberius for Germanicus, Nero for Corbulo) who is represented as the essence of political corruption and contemporary metropolitan vice. An almost melancholy sense of displacement from their own societies hangs over these symbols of a virtuous Old Rome, which has been exiled in their persons to the fringes of the empire. In the end and in spite of itself, the text sends an ambiguous message about the imperial endeavor as a whole through these figures, who conform to the idealized image of the benevolent conqueror while simultaneously telegraphing a cultural pessimism that undercuts a primary rationale for their conquests – the dissemination of that very culture.

Recently Dylan Sailor has approached the problem of Tacitus’ two voices from another angle, arguing that they result from the different ways the historian positions himself in relation to his readers on the different issues of domestic politics and foreign expansion. Concentrating on Tacitus’ critique of the principate rather than his rhetoric of social and moral decline, Sailor contrasts the “alienated self” projected in the accounts of political dysfunction with the self rotating to the fore when Tacitus comes to the frontiers. Here the voice joins the dominant discourse, because in this role the historian

forms part of a broader community that, taken as a whole, still exercises dominion over the rest of the world and founds its identity in no small part upon that fact. If we call his stance on the principate ‘alienated,’ the right word for his relationship to the empire is ‘implicated.’ ... (I)n the former instance ... he is (a) martyr; in the latter, (a) *triumphator*. In either, he is an instrument that vindicates the legitimacy of an order of the world in which his fellows are deeply invested by rejecting its alternatives. As martyr, he stands for an order of Roman society in which no autocrat impinged on the full realization of elite possibilities. ... As victor, he reinforces the real order of the inhabited world, in which one people rules all others, and that one people is Rome’s.

(Sailor 2008, 321)

Thus Sailor locates the point of intersection between these two apparently disparate voices in the investment they both have in

validating and naturalizing particular worldviews, in making them seem self-evident.

In doing so he touches on an important task of postcolonial reading, which is to expose how a text participates in world-creation and specifically how it constructs the imperial domination of one people over others as the natural order of things. This is the task I have pursued in this essay, but it is possible that postcolonial readings of Tacitus could take other forms. It is well known that the *Germania* and the Arminius portrait in the *Annals* played a sinister role in the development of German nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Did modern Anglo-European imperialists likewise enlist Tacitus *qua* apologist for empire to bolster their cause, much as they used the Horace of the “Roman Odes” and especially Vergil’s *Aeneid* (see Gaisser 1994 and Vance 1997, 139–143)? If so, such a project would have involved as it did with Vergil a massive and willful erasure of ambiguity in the original.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Many introductions to postcolonial theory and criticism attempt to synthesize the various currents of this collection of historical and critical developments; some are more useful than others. One of the most lucid is McLeod (2000); for a more advanced introduction, see Moore-Gilbert (1997). Boehmer (1995) relies less on theory but does offer an engaging overview of colonial and postcolonial literature. One might also peruse the anthologies of Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) and Williams and Chrisman (1994); both include excerpts from seminal texts in the field, going back as early as Fanon. The scholarship on Roman imperialism and its ideologies is obviously vast, but only recently has it occasionally taken a clearly postcolonial turn as outlined in the first section of this essay. Some good examples of this development are Webster and Cooper (1996); Habinek (1998, 151–169) on Ovid as “imperial subject” (with a rebuttal from Davis 2002, who objects *inter alia* that ancient and modern empires were different; Webster addresses this issue in the introduction to the 1996 volume just mentioned); and two articles in a special issue of *Arethusa* (2003) devoted to concepts of center and periphery: Benton on Senecan tragedy as a reflection of anxieties about the effect of imperial acquisitions on Roman identity and Pomeroy on Tacitus (see below). Studies of the reception of classical texts in later colonial and postcolonial worlds represent another aspect of postcolonial studies in Classics; Goff (2005) and Hardwick and Gillespie (2007) are notable

here. Finally on Tacitus himself the bibliography of Benario (1991) gives a good sense of the range of more traditional approaches to the question of the historian's relationship to empire. Postcolonial inroads are best exemplified by Clarke (2001), O'Gorman (1993), and Rutledge (2000), all discussed in this essay. In addition, the article of Pomeroy (2003) on "center and periphery in Tacitus' *Histories*," and Master's (2008) dissertation on the collapse of distinctions between Roman and Other in the account of dynastic struggle after the Julio-Claudians both owe a debt to postcolonial modes of analysis.

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Tacitus and Political Thought

Daniel Kapust

1. Introduction

Approaching Tacitus' political theory is no clear-cut task. One of his early Renaissance readers, Francesco Guicciardini, writes in his *Ricordi*: "Cornelius Tacitus teaches those who live under tyrants quite well the way of living and governing themselves prudently, just as he teaches tyrants the ways of founding tyranny" (Guicciardini ed. Scarano 1983). The passage is illustrative: Tacitus seems to provide mixed messages, an appearance reinforced by the diverse readings of Tacitus that characterize the history of political thought. He is a defender of liberty, the "red" Tacitus. This is what we see in Leonardo Bruni's *Panegyric to the City of Florence*, in which he cites Tacitus' *Histories* 1.1 on the connection between liberty and intellectual prowess (Bruni ed. Kohl and Witt 1978, 154). He is a proponent of monarchy, the "black" Tacitus. This is the opinion of Justus Lipsius, who glosses Tacitus with approval: *Histories* 1.1 provides him with the claim that "it serves the interests of peace if all power is concentrated in one person," and *Annals* 1.9 adds "*that for a country in discord there has in many cases been no other solution than that it be governed by One*" (Lipsius ed. Wasznik 2004, 2.1).

Such diverse readings of Tacitus are unsurprising; his mode of writing invites selection and appropriation. The *Annals*, Lipsius' key source, is filled with *sententiae*; a *sententia* "is a saying drawn from life, which shows concisely either what happens or ought to happen in life" (*Rhet. Her.* 4.24, trans. Caplan). The *sententiae* were collected in commonplace-books in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and display "an unmistakable pessimism about the courage and virtue of the individual" and "warnings against the dangers of political ambition" (Lipsius ed. Wasznik 2004, 152). The passages in which

Tacitus condemns the Julio-Claudians, by contrast, tend not to be *sententiae* but longer narrations. This helps explain why Lipsius, who likely relied on common-place books, read Tacitus as he did (Lipsius ed. Wasznik 2004, 153).

A later reader of Tacitus – John Milton – raises a similar point in criticizing the royalist Salmasius:

But, you say, ‘Tacitus, who flourished under the rule of one man’ wrote as follows: ‘The gods have given the emperor supreme authority, while the subjects are left with the glory of obedience.’ You say not where he wrote this, knowing well that you had deceived your readers; but I nosed it out at once ... Those are not the words of Tacitus, who was a noble writer most opposed to tyranny, but of a certain Roman knight M. Terentius in Tacitus, *Annals* VI, who, when on trial for his life, uttered this flattery of Tiberius amid other such expressions spoken in fear of execution by him.

(Milton ed. Wolfe 1966, 443)

Salmasius had taken Tacitus out of context; had he read Tacitus himself and not simply his *sententiae* he would have seen that Tacitus was an *opponent* of monarchy and understood its connection to the loss of liberty and equality.

This explanation of bifurcated readings may be joined with another. As Syme notes, “Tacitus gives very little away” (1958, 520). Syme’s Tacitus is a political thinker engaged in a kind of balancing act. An apparent critic of the principate, Tacitus recognized that “the rule of one man cannot be avoided” (Syme 1958, 547). No fan of tyranny, he has little use for those who seek “ostentatious renown” (Syme 1970, 136). He favors a middle path, between contumacy and obsequiousness: “Opposition was now a foolish anachronism, and perhaps dangerous. To men of judgment, what matters is the quality of a ruler and the spirit of his regime” (Syme 1970, 132). Yet the sheer ambiguity of Tacitus’ writings on matters of political theory may mean something more: “Tacitus’ views on men and government are ambiguous, necessarily so, for they reflect the historical situation” (Syme 1970, 139).

Perhaps a prudential and ambiguous Tacitus is, while less satisfying than either the “red” or “black” alternatives, the Tacitus that most captures his nuance; indeed, this will be the reading that I develop in Section 3 (on the “red” and “black” readings of Tacitus, see Mellor 1993, 145). The red Tacitus is a critic of monarchy and defender of liberty, a republican, perhaps even a revolutionary; the black Tacitus is a student of courts and courtesans, a penetrating analyst, perhaps an advocate of despotism and *Realpolitik*. Yet Tacitus

in his own voice eschews extremes of behavior and outlook, showing equal disdain for empty shows of liberty and spineless obsequiousness. Before exploring this claim and its implications, however, we need to consider two additional matters: how Tacitus has been read in recent political theory scholarship and how he has been read in the history of political thought.

2. Political Interpretations of Tacitus

Recent Political Interpretations of Tacitus

It is no exaggeration to say that Tacitus has not been at the forefront of recent scholarship by political theorists, though there has been some attention to his work in recent years. (To be sure, Roman writers in general have not been at the forefront of recent scholarship; on this point, see Hammer 2008, chapter 1). Still, a search of political science and philosophy journals for articles centering on Tacitus produces few results. Those few that are produced, however, cohere around a reading of Tacitus as a critic of monarchy.

Arlene Saxonhouse reads the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* as Tacitus' demonstration of the irrelevance of traditional modes of Roman political activity, especially oratory, given Rome's transition from Republic to principate. Saxonhouse suggests Tacitus turns to "a Platonic model and Platonic themes," urging men to turn from oratory to art – especially poetry – due to the political changes involved in the development of the principate. In doing so Tacitus shows "that there are alternative ways of participating in the political community which do not demand acquiescence to falsehood and reliance on flattery" (Saxonhouse 1975, 54). Roger Boesche reads Tacitus as a theorist of despotism, given his central concern with Rome's transition from "the principate of Augustus to the despotism of emperors from Tiberius to Domitian" (Boesche 1987, 189). For Tacitus such despotism entailed "absolute and unrestrained rule by one person, a rule that reduced all others to servitude" (Boesche 1987, 190). Boesche is especially concerned with the dynamics of despotism, ranging from the replacement of politics with administration to the way in which "despotism corrupted language and brought dishonesty and hypocrisy to social relationships" (1987, 205). Benedetto Fontana reads Tacitus as demonstrating the transformation of an agonistic public sphere which had characterized the Republic to "one vast monolithic wasteland, where all political plurality and social differentiation no

longer provide the basis for the life of the state, and where therefore *libertas* has been extinguished by the peace of the prince” (Fontana 1993, 30). In this wasteland *principes* ruled over the Roman state as if it were “mere appendages of the imperial *domus* or household” (Fontana 1993, 30). Hammer, in a recent work, reads Tacitus with Montesquieu as exploring “the political psychology of despotism” (Hammer 2008, 11). That is to say, Tacitus’ analysis deals with “the gradual perversion and disintegration of the stable cues by which individuals orient themselves politically” (Hammer 2008, 136). Deploying the Greek medical term *atrophia*, wasting disease, Hammer argues that the twin forces of luxury and fear corrupt and waste the body politic. These combine with the contraction of the political to the office, and ultimately the person, of the *princeps*, bringing with it a “radical, leveling quality” (Hammer 2008, 10). Yet Tacitus’ writings have a “curative” function in that Tacitus “makes visible an invisible reality: the mental map by which we navigate the political terrain” (Hammer 2008, 177, 179; on the imagery of disease and remedy in the *Histories*, see Edwards in this volume).

Tacitus’ Reception to the Nineteenth Century

What was Tacitus’ status, and interpretation, in earlier political thought? For a long time, the answer was, in essence, not much. The story of Tacitus’ fate is well known. From late antiquity to the Renaissance, Tacitus’ fame waned. Perceived as hostile to Christians, the last ancient reference to Tacitus “referred to him only as ‘a certain Cornelius’ ” (Mellor 1993, 138). He was attacked by Tertullian and Orosius for his treatment of Christians, though “Tacitus was not suppressed; he was forgotten” (Schellhase 1976, 4, notes that Tacitus’ name does not feature in medieval library catalogues and that there are only four certain uses of Tacitus from late antiquity to the fourteenth century). Tacitus’ reemergence began after 1360, with the arrival of a copy of *Annals* 11–16 in Florence (Mellor 1993, 138 and Murgia in this volume). The political climate in Florence, struggling with ducal Milan, was ripe for republican political theorizing. In this vein Leonardo Bruni was among the first to make use of Tacitus in his *Panegyric to the City of Florence*. Drawing on *Histories* 1.1, Bruni emphasized the connection between Florence and the greatness of the Roman Republic along with the connection between liberty and virtue:

At the time when Florence was founded the city of Rome flourished greatly in power, liberty, genius, and especially with great citizens. Now, after the Republic had been subjected to the

power of a single head, ‘those outstanding minds vanished,’ Tacitus says. So it is of importance whether a colony was founded at a later date, since by then all the virtue and nobility of the Romans had been destroyed; nothing great or outstanding could be conveyed by those who left the city.

(Bruni ed. Kohl and Witt 1978, 154)

The argument was, according to Baron, revolutionary; not just new, it was “something which until Bruni’s day had been unimaginable” (Baron, 1966, 58). Bruni challenged “the late Roman and medieval political theory of the universal *imperium*,” and did so by emphasizing the corruptive effects of imperial rule on virtue *and* using a previously unavailable source (Schellhase 1976, 18).

Tacitus’ role would increase with successive printings of his works; by the early seventeenth century “there were about sixty main publications in whole or in part of the works of Tacitus” and French, Italian, German, English, and Spanish translations (Schellhase, 1976, 14). His role, however, varied with each thinker that used him, though there were, as we have seen, two broad trends – the red and the black Tacitus. In sixteenth-century Germany, for instance, a largely red Tacitus – and especially his *Germania* – was enlisted in German patriotism: “religious and political leaders wanted to ensure the region’s independence, whereas artists and intellectuals were interested in defining its distinctive culture and character” (Rives 1999, 70 and this volume). Conrad Celtis and Ulrich von Hutten were instrumental in Tacitus’ popularization and enlistment in German patriotism; von Hutten’s dialogue *Arminius* led to what Schellhase terms an “Arminius cult” in Reformation Germany, linked to political liberty and independence (Schellhase 1976, 47).

If Tacitus’ use was generally of a red tint in Germany, matters were more complicated in Italy. Some of the earlier sixteenth-century political uses of his works are in the writings of Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli refers to *Annals* 3.19 in chapter 13 of *The Prince* on the topic “Of Auxiliary, Mixed, and One’s Own Soldiers.” Favoring the reliance on one’s own arms, he writes that “it has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men ‘that nothing is so infirm and unstable as fame for power not sustained by one’s own force’ ” (Machiavelli trans. Mansfield 1998, 57). More sustained and significant is Machiavelli’s use of Tacitus in the republican *Discourses on Livy*, where he alludes to *Histories* 1.1 in describing the corruptive effects of Julius Caesar’s rule on historiography; *Histories* 4.3 serves as evidence for Machiavelli’s argument that princes may be just as ungrateful as the people (Machiavelli trans. Crick 1983, 1.10, 1.29). The most famous allusion is to *Histories* 4.8, the so-called “golden

sentence”:

There is, in fact, a golden saying voiced by Cornelius Tacitus, who says that men have to respect the past but to submit to the present, and, while they should be desirous of having good princes, should put up with them of whatever sort they may turn out to be. And unquestionably those who act otherwise usually bring disaster both upon themselves and upon their country.

(Machiavelli trans. Crick 1983, 3.6)

Machiavelli makes an additional use of Tacitus that has shades of what would be termed “reason of state” by Botero and Guicciardini. In discussing whether one ought to be compassionate or cruel in dealing with the masses, Machiavelli cites Tacitus (against Livy) as evidence of the utility of cruelty: “Tacitus ... arrives at the opposite conclusions, which he expresses in these words: ‘In ruling the masses punishment is of more avail than considerateness’ ” (Machiavelli trans. Crick 1983, 3.19; the reference is probably to *Ann.* 3.55).

Tacitus supplied republican Florentines with ammunition against their monarchical opponents, but his influence increased in the wake of Rome’s sack in 1527. Machiavelli’s contemporary, Francesco Guicciardini, also knew Tacitus but perceived him in a much more ambiguous light, one that seems to reflect his times: foreign domination of Italy, Florence no longer a republic. In this vein Schellhase describes Guicciardini’s “growing despair,” which “is illustrated through his uses of Tacitus” (1976, 97). We have already noted Guicciardini’s claim that Tacitus teaches those living under tyrants how to live and govern themselves prudently, while teaching tyrants the ways of founding tyranny. Guicciardini also sees Tacitus as having great insight into the psychology of tyrants:

Whoever wants to see what the thoughts of tyrants are should read Cornelius Tacitus, when he reports the ultimate reasoning that the dying Augustus had with Tiberius.

(Guicciardini ed. Scarano 1983, 731)

Annals 3.65 also provides insight into the masses:

One would not wonder at the servile spirit of our citizens who reads in Cornelius Tacitus that the Romans, accustomed to ruling the world and living in such glory, served so vilely under the emperors that Tiberius, a tyrannical and arrogant man, was nauseated at such ineptitude.

(Guicciardini ed. Scarano 1983, 822–823)

Guicciardini’s Tacitus is a skeptic and an acute observer of human psychology.

The French thinker Jean Bodin drew lessons from Tacitus as well. In his *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, *Annals* 4.30 serves as evidence against the viability of mixed government (Bodin ed. McRae 1962, 193; Bodin is referring to Tacitus, *Annals*, 4.30) and *Annals* 14.6 provides a lesson for princes dealing with conspiracies:

the best and surest way to avoid the farther daunger of a conspiracy already prevented, is for a prince to dissemble the matter, as if he knew not the conspirators, as *Tacitus* well sayed, *Optimum remedium insidiarum, est sinon intelligatur*, The best remedie of a conspiracie is not to seeme to understand thereof.

(*Bodin ed. McRae 1962, 522*)

He also alludes to *Annals* 4.18 (“We are more prone to revenge than to give thanks, for thanks is held a burthen, and revenge a gaine”) and uses *Annals* 1.12 to support the claim that “for the execution of great exploits the power of commanding must be restrained to one alone ” (Bodin ed. McRae 1962, 519, 716).

Of his sixteenth-century readers, however, two were central to the development of what has been termed “Tacitism”: Michel de Montaigne and Justus Lipsius. Indeed, Burke suggests that it was in a period beginning in the 1580s, due in no small part to these two writers, that Tacitus was “a fashion, a craze” (Burke 1969, 150). For both of these writers the turn to Tacitus coupled with a turn to Stoicism and skepticism that matched their own outlooks (Tuck 1993, 45). This “was not merely an epistemological conceit”; each author sought peace and “the life of detachment from passions and from the beliefs which *cause* emotion” (Tuck 1993, 45). Lipsius published an edition of Tacitus in 1574; in his dedication to the Emperor Maximilian, he notes that through Tacitus “everyone can be informed about the courts of princes, their inner lives, their plans, commands, and deeds, and in most things the similarity with our own time being evident, his mind can grasp the truth that similar causes lead to similar outcomes” (Lipsius ed. Wasznik 2004, 94–95). Tacitus would serve as “the single most important author” for Lipsius in *Six Books of Politics or Political Instruction*, a work which views monarchy as the best form of government and draws on Tacitus to make this claim (Lipsius ed. Wasznik 2004, 148). Stressing the importance of constancy, Lipsius’ reading of Tacitus, in turn, was fostered by his attention to Tacitus’ *sententiae* (Burke 1969, 156; Lipsius ed. Wasznik 2004, 154).

For Montaigne, Tacitus was a source of key lessons for “those who have any place in the government of the world” (Montaigne ed. Hazlett 1910a, 227). Like Lipsius, Montaigne also sees Tacitus as fitting his times quite well, writing in “Of the Art of Conferring” that

“His pen seems most proper for a troubled and sick state, as ours at present is; you would often say that he paints and pinches us” (Montaigne ed. Hazlett 1910a, 228). Montaigne also enlists Tacitus in support of his skepticism; in “We Taste Nothing Pure” he paraphrases Tacitus: “Every great example has in some mixture of injustice, which recompenses the wrong done to particular men by the public utility” (Montaigne ed. Hazlett 1910b, 140–141).

If in Machiavelli and Bruni we have encountered the red Tacitus, in Lipsius and Montaigne we have encountered what Burke terms “‘pink’ Tacitists, supporters of limited monarchy in an age of absolutism” (Burke 1969, 163). In Giovanni Botero’s thought we see a decidedly black Tacitus. In the dedication to *Reason of State*, Botero – for better or worse – links Tacitus to Machiavelli:

Among the things I have observed (at courts), I have been greatly astonished to find Reason of State a constant subject of discussion and to hear the opinions of Niccolò Machiavelli and Cornelius Tacitus frequently quoted: the former for his precepts relating to the rule and government of peoples, the latter for his lively description of the arts employed by the Emperor Tiberius in acquiring and retaining the imperial title in Rome.

(Botero trans. Waley and Waley 1956, xiii)

To be sure, Botero distinguishes between Tacitus and Tiberius, blaming Machiavelli for his “lack of conscience,” while discussing Tiberius as an anti-model (Botero trans. Waley and Waley 1956, xiii). Yet connecting Tacitus to Machiavelli was bad enough, even if at the time this view of Tacitus was in the minority. However, “Botero’s condemnation of Tacitus as one who proffered evil counsel to rulers was to become the predominant political interpretation of Tacitus in the next century” (Schellhase, 1976, 127).

Opinions and uses of Tacitus on the Continent would diminish after 1600, and “by the middle of the seventeenth century many people, Italians especially, generally saw Tacitus as both evil and useless” (Schellhase 1976, 127). In English political thought, however, Tacitus would gain in popularity and use; as on the Continent, there would be a black and a red Tacitus (Weinbrot 1993). The latter is evident, for instance, in Thomas More’s unfinished *History of King Richard the Third*, in which Richard seems a modern-day Tiberius. The opening of More’s history is modeled on the opening of the *Annals*, and More used Tacitus (and Sallust) as a model for imitation quite frequently (see the editor’s comments in More ed. Kinney 1986, xxxv–xxxix). The portrait of Richard bears an unmistakable likeness to Tacitus’ Tiberius in his dissimulation.

Through Shakespeare’s reading of More, Elizabethan England

encountered a decidedly Tiberian – and Machiavellian – Richard III (More ed. Kinney 1986, xlvii). Elizabeth herself was not interested in Tacitus; she disliked his style in particular. According to Francis Bacon, her distaste for Tacitus had a political element as well, given John Hayward's allusions to Tacitus in a history of Henry IV. When she asked Bacon if the book was treasonous, he replied, "No, Madam, for treason I cannot deliver opinion that there is any, but very much felony ... because he had stolen many of his sentences and conceits out of Cornelius Tacitus" (Burke 1969, 155). Yet even if Elizabeth detected dangerous opinions in Tacitus, James I's *Basilikon Doron* makes frequent references to Tacitus in marginal notes (Tenney 1941, 156). As a further measure of Tacitus' increasing popularity, Ben Jonson published the play *Sejanus* in 1603; it begins with a savage portrayal of courts and flattery. In the words of Sabinus, a courtly outsider, "We want the fine arts, and their thriving use should make us graced or favoured of the times: we have no shift of faces, no cleft tongues, no soft and glutinous bodies that can stick like snails on painted walls, or on our breasts creep up, to fall from that proud height to which we did by slavery, not service, climb" (Jonson ed. Corder 2000, *Sejanus His Fall* lines 4–11).

The increased role and respectability of Tacitus in Stuart England can be seen most clearly in the writings of Francis Bacon, who helped to popularize him. In his essay "Of Seditions and Troubles" (Bacon ed. Spedding, Ellis, and Heath, 1968a), Bacon uses Tacitus' *Histories* (1.28 and 2.38) to bolster his discussion of tumults. Perhaps more pointed is his use of Tacitus in a 1610 speech he delivered as solicitor general to the House of Commons. Bacon quotes *Agricola* 3.2 in praising James (likening him to Nerva) and in asserting the active role of the British crown in relation to Parliament. Less favorable to Bacon are the references to Tacitus that pepper his letters to James. For example, he asks to be appointed Secretary of State in a letter dated May 31, 1612 and cites *Histories* 2.95 while claiming that he "will be ready as a chessman" to serve the king (Bacon ed. Spedding, Ellis, and Heath, 1968b, 282).

In the hands of Bacon, Tacitus is a courtly figure, more than amenable to monarchy and obsequy. He would also become an enemy of court and king. The lectures of Isaac Dorislaus, lecturer in history at Cambridge, are famous: he drew on Tacitus to argue that tyrants might be met with force, pointing to Lucius Junius Brutus as an illustration in a subsequent lecture. He did not hold his position for long (Peltonen 1995, 275).

The monarchist Robert Filmer used Tacitus in *Patriarcha*: "Now let Tacitus and Suetonius be searched, and see if all their cruel emperors can match this popular villain (i.e., Sulla) in such an universal

slaughter of citizens or civil butchery” (Filmer ed. Sommerville 1991, 30). Tacitus also holds a prominent place in the political theorizing of monarchy’s opponents. Milton, who referred to Tacitus’ *Agricola* in defending free speech in *Areopagitica*, goes further in his *Second Defence of the English People*. While Milton notes that there are monarchical statements to be found in Tacitus, they may not always represent Tacitus’ opinion (Milton ed. Wolfe 1966, 443). Thus, he points out the error of Salmasius, a passage we encountered earlier:

But, you say, “Tacitus, who flourished under the rule of one man” wrote as follows: ‘The gods have given the emperor supreme authority, while the subjects are left with the glory of obedience.’ You say not where he wrote this, knowing well that you had deceived your readers; but I nosed it out at once ... Those are not the words of Tacitus, who was a noble writer most opposed to tyranny, but of a certain Roman knight M. Terentius in Tacitus, *Annals* VI, who, when on trial for his life, uttered this flattery of Tiberius amid other such expressions spoken in fear of execution by him.

(Milton ed. Wolfe 1966, 443)

For Milton, Tacitus’ real opinion of monarchy is this: “After the victory at Actium the form of government was overthrown and no trace of the old pure manners could be found; equality was over and everyone looked to the orders of the emperor” (Milton ed. Wolfe 1966, 443).

For Algernon Sidney, Tacitus was more important in criticizing monarchy. In Sidney’s posthumously published *Discourses Concerning Government*, Tacitus is a frequent source of evidence for the corruptive effects of monarchy. In Sidney’s hands, Tacitus is not just an enemy of tyranny but of monarchy in general:

Tacitus does not fix this upon one prince, but upon all that he writes of; and to give his readers a taste of what he was to write, he says, *that nobility and honours were dangerous, but that virtue brought most certain destruction*; and in another place, *that after the slaughter of many excellent men, Nero resolved to cut down virtue itself, and therefore kill’d Thræsea Paetus and Barea Soranus*.

(Sidney ed. West 1990, 267)

Perhaps Sidney’s favorite passage in Tacitus’ writings comes from the *Agricola*, a passage he cites at least four times in the *Discourses*: “*That amongst other instruments of enslaving nations, they imposed kings upon them*” (Sidney ed. West 1990, 325; cf. 287, 390, 407). In his dialogue *Court Maxims*, Tacitus is a favorite source for the anti-monarchical Eunomius in arguing with the courtesan Philaethes;

Tacitus' opinion of monarchy is similarly devastating:

Tacitus is plentiful in showing that the first work of the Roman tyrants was to destroy all virtue in the nobility and people, so as to render valour, prudence, etcetera unpardonable crimes. And that ... the whole power was fallen into the hands of such as Sejanus, Pallaris, Tigellinus, and others who by their lives showed themselves to be the worst of all men except their masters, and by their deaths the most terrible.

(Sidney ed. Blom, Mulier, and Janse 1996, 84–85)

Tacitus' status in the ideological conflicts between monarchy's allies and enemies alike makes his absence in the writings of the foremost political thinker of seventeenth-century England even more striking. A search for the name of Tacitus in the index to Hobbes's English writings is fruitless. This is ironic, given that Hobbes's occasional employer, Francis Bacon, held him in high regard. Hobbes may have written an early and anonymous work on Tacitus, "A Discourse on the Beginning of Tacitus." Hobbes would not refer again to Tacitus explicitly in writing; Martinich suggests that Hobbes held him at a distance because "Tacitus's sympathies were with the republicans" (Martinich 1999, 46).

Though he would not mention him by name, Hobbes would *echo* Tacitus in later writings. For instance, in chapter 11 of *Leviathan*, Hobbes writes:

To have done more hurt to a man, than he can, or is willing to expiate, enclineth the doer to hate the sufferer. For he must expect revenge, or forgiveness; both which are hatefull.

(Hobbes ed. Tuck, 1996, 71)

As Martinich (1999, 48) notes, Hobbes echoes his own commentary on Tacitus' *Annals* and his translation of *Agricola* 42.4.1–2, *proprium humani ingenii odisse quem laeseris* ("it is human nature to hate the man whom you have injured"). We may detect further echoes of Tacitus, especially his seemingly cautionary approach to rhetoric. For example, Hobbes writes in *On the Citizen* that

to be absent from a triall of wits, although those trialls are pleasant to the Eloquent, is not therefore a grievance to them, unlesse we will say, that it is a grievance to valiant men to be restrained from fighting, because they delight in it.

(Hobbes ed. Warrender 1983, 136)

We may compare this passage to *Dialogus de Oratoribus* 37.7:

We all know that the blessings of peace bring more profit and greater happiness than the horrors of war; yet war produces a

larger number of good fighters than peace. It is the same with eloquence.

John Locke, Hobbes's younger contemporary, refers to Tacitus in *On the Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures* and *A Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, but primarily as a historical source (Locke 1963a, 81; Locke 1963b, 374). Benedict Spinoza, by contrast, made much greater use of Tacitus; in his hands Tacitus became a nuanced source in political argument. He uses *Annals* 1.12.4 to support the claim that "the will of the commonwealth be taken for the will of all, what the commonwealth decides to be just and good must be regarded as having been so decided by every citizen" (Spinoza ed. Wernham 1958, 287). For Spinoza, as opposed to Hobbes, the ideal commonwealth was participatory and not a monarchy, yet he also cites Tacitus as the source of anti-democratic claims ("there is no moderation in the masses, they terrorize unless they are afraid," the common people "has no truth or judgment in it") to refute in defending democratic government (Spinoza ed. Wernham 1958, 359).

Tacitus would continue to play an important role in political theorizing during the eighteenth century. For the American revolutionaries and the Whig thinkers they drew on, Tacitus helped to diagnose the corruptive effects of tyranny. *Cato's Letters*, written by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, deploy Tacitus in defending free speech and diagnosing corruption and the dangers of power. Of particular importance is the following passage, given the connection between liberty and virtue on the one hand and corruption and slavery on the other in revolutionary thought:

Tacitus, taking Notice of the woful Decline of Virtue and Liberty, towards the End of the Republick, says, That the greatest Villainies were committed with Impunity, and Ruin was the Price of Honesty; deterrima quaeque impune; ac multa honesta exitio fuere.

(Trenchard 1969, 206; on the popularity of Cato's Letters, see Bailyn 1967, 35–37)

Benjamin Franklin also used Tacitus to defend free speech in the *Silence Dogood Letters*:

The best Princes have ever encouraged and promoted Freedom of Speech; they know that upright Measures would defend themselves, and that all upright Men would defend them. Tacitus, speaking of the Reign of some of the Princes abovemention'd, says with Extasy, *Rara Temporum felcitate, ubi sentire quae velis, & quae sentias dicere licet.*

In England Tacitus continued to be of use to political theorizing. Hume begins the first two sections of *A Treatise on Human Nature* with the quote from *Histories* 1.1 (used by Franklin above): *Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire, quae velis; & quae sentias, dicere licet* (“the rare happiness of times, when we may think what we please, and express what we think”). He deploys Tacitus (in an unfavorable comparison to Suetonius) to illustrate the concept of utility in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. In his essay “Of the Rise of the Arts and Sciences” he uses Tacitus to discuss the ills of arbitrary government: “Arbitrary power, in all cases, is somewhat oppressive and debasing; but it is altogether ruinous and intolerable, when contracted into a small compass; and becomes still worse, when the person, who possesses it, knows that the time of his authority is limited and uncertain. *Habet subjectos tamquam suos; viles, ut alieno*” (Hume ed. Beauchamp 1998, 112, 117).

Hume’s fellow Scot, Adam Smith, made less political use of Tacitus, though he would refer to Tacitus extensively in his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. In the latter Smith develops an interesting explanation for Tacitus’ inward turn:

Sentiment must be what will chiefly interest such a people. They who live thus in a great City where they have the free Liberty of disposing of their wealth in all the Luxuries and Refinement of Life; who are not called to any publick employment but what they inclined to and obtained from the favour and Indulgence of the prince; Such a people, I say, having nothing to engage them in the hurry of life would naturally turn their attention to the motions of the human mind, and those events that were accounted for by the different internall affections that influence the persons concerned, would be what most suited their taste.

(Smith ed. Bryce 1983, 111–112)

Smith’s and Hume’s contemporary, Edmund Burke, alludes to and uses Tacitus as well in *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, and *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Indeed, Burke vindicates Tacitus of his alleged connection to Machiavelli in his “Speech on Fox’s East India Bill” (December 1, 1783): “It has been said (and, with regard to one of them, with truth) that Tacitus and Machiavel, by their cold way of relating enormous crimes, have in some sort appeared not to disapprove them; that they seem a sort of professors of the art of tyranny, and that they corrupt the minds of their readers by not expressing the detestation and horror that naturally belong to horrible and detestable proceedings” (Burke ed. Canavan 1999, 126).

French thinkers such as Montesquieu and Rousseau knew and made use of Tacitus; Mellor goes as far as to describe the French Revolution as “a Tacitean moment: a passion for freedom acted out in great dramatic tableaux,” with Tacitus being “one of the authors most cited in debates and the revolutionary press” (Mellor 1993, 156). Montesquieu’s use of Tacitus was the most extensive (see Hammer 2008, chapter 4). Tacitus serves as an important source in Montesquieu’s *Considerations on the Causes of the Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans* and is cited extensively in *The Spirit of the Laws*. Rousseau tells us that at an early age he “translated the first Book of his history” (Rousseau ed. Kelly and Grace 1990a, 331). The use is more political in *On the Social Contract*, where *Histories* 1.1 serves to illustrate the inadequacy of princely education and to show the emergence of a servile unanimity “when the citizens, fallen into servitude, no longer have freedom or will.” Rousseau writes that

Then fear and flattery turn voting into acclamation ... Tacitus notes that under Otho, the Senators heaping execrations on Vitellius took care at the same time to make a frightful noise, so that, if by chance he were to become master, he could not tell what they each had said.

(Rousseau ed. Gourevitch 1997, 123)

In his *Letters from a Mountain*, Tacitus illustrates the servility and flattery of those who rule: “Whoever is master cannot be free, and to rule is to obey. Your magistrates know that better than anyone, those who like Otho omit nothing servile in order to command.” He continues with high praise for Tacitus: “*In general, says the Author of the Letters, men fear to obey more than they love to command.* Tacitus judged differently about it and knew the human heart” (Rousseau ed. Kelly and Grace 1990b, 61).

Interest in Tacitus would wane among nineteenth-century political thinkers. Tacitus was still read and used by political theorists, but “the gloomy vision of Tacitus became much less congenial and a more optimistic age refused to accept such an unvarnished view of human evil” (Mellor 1993, 160). John Stuart Mill had read – and translated – Tacitus, according to his *Autobiography*; and he refers to Tacitus (along with several other ancient writers) in his 1867 *Inaugural Address to Saint Andrews* as providing “remarks and maxims of singular good sense and penetration, applicable both to political and to private life” (Mill ed. Robson and Stillinger 1981, 229). But the use is slight.

Hegel, Nietzsche, and Weber all refer to Tacitus, though his role in their thought pales in comparison to sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century thinkers. Wood, for instance, detects a Tacitean influence in Hegel’s account of German culture in *Elements of the*

Philosophy of Right (Hegel ed. Wood 1991, 480). Marx and Engels knew and cited Tacitus, normally as a historical source, though Marx made a pointed reference to *Histories* 1.1 in criticizing censorship in his early *Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction* (Marx 1975). More overt is Nietzsche's use of Tacitus in *Daybreak*. Indeed, Nietzsche's use of Tacitus turns upside down Tertullian's valuation of him:

Supposing we felt towards another as he feels towards himself – that which Schopenhauer calls sympathy but which would be better designate empathy – then we would have to hate him if, like Pascal, he found himself hateful. And that is probably how Pascal in fact felt towards mankind as a whole; as did the earliest Christians, who, under Nero, were, as Tacitus reports, 'convicted' of *odium generi humani* ("hatred of mankind").

(*Nietzsche trans. Hollingdale 1993, 38*)

In *Human, all too Human*, Nietzsche discusses Tacitus' (and Thucydides') wish that his works might enjoy "immortal life" and praises his style: he gave "permanence to his ideas ... by boiling them down" and made no "miscalculation" in doing so from the perspective of immortality (Weber ed. Roth and Wittich 1978, 254, 472, 945). Weber clearly read and knew Tacitus, but Tacitus is largely a historical source for him. In his *Economy and Society*, he refers to the *Germania* in discussing his concept of charismatic authority, religion, and status groups, and to *Annals* 16.18 in discussing domination and economic power.

3. Prudence and the Navigation of the Political World

We have thus far encountered political readings and uses of Tacitus, some slight, some extensive, ranging from the red and the black to contemporary works of political theory. What of Tacitus himself? Does Tacitus develop anything like a coherent philosophy of politics? My own reading of Tacitus, as has been indicated, is that he eschews extremes. Tacitus is an acute observer of the human condition, especially the dilemmas associated with courts and courtesans, power and the powerful. Tacitus is a critic and a teacher, but in his lessons he does not seek to transform the external world so much as to cultivate the internal world.

The most fitting entry to Tacitus' political thought is his *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, in form and content his most philosophical work. In the

background of the work is the “quarrel” between rhetoric and philosophy, a quarrel rooted in fifth-century Athens which reemerged in first-century BCE Rome (see Kennedy 1963, 321–328). Plato’s tactic in the *Gorgias* was to reject oratory in favor of philosophy, to argue that rhetoric was no art but a mere knack for flattery and that its foremost practitioners did more harm than good (Pl., *Gorgias*, 462c–465a; 515e–517a); Cicero in *de Oratore* seeks to synthesize the two, repairing the “rupture” between the tongue and the brain and delineating his ideal orator-statesman (3.52–90). If, for Cicero, eloquence has “ever reigned supreme in every free nation (*omni libero populo*) and especially in quiet and peaceful communities” (*in pacatis tranquillisque ciuitatibus*, *de Orat.* 1.30), serving as the mark of a “well-established civic order” (*bene constitutae ciuitatis*, *Brut.* 7. 45), matters are quite different in the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*. By contrast Maternus describes oratory thus in his second speech: it is “not a quiet and peaceable art, or one that finds satisfaction in moral worth and good behavior”; instead, oratory is “a foster-child of license, which foolish men called liberty” (*eloquentia alumna licentiae, quam stulti libertatem uocant*, *Dial.* 40.2). Maternus views oratory and political order as incompatible: “It is a plant that does not grow under a well-regulated constitution” (*bene constitutis ciuitatibus non oritur*, *Dial.* 40.2).

In his second speech Maternus highlights the apparent incompatibility between the contentious and public oratory that was of such importance to Cicero and the present, in which a single individual rules (*unus*, *Dial.* 41.4). The present seems preferable, given the tumults of the past, and the speech anticipates themes found in anti-rhetorical thinkers, such as Hobbes, who sought to quiet antagonistic rhetoric (see Garsten, 2006, chapter 1). Yet much rides on the adjective coupled with *unus*: *sapientissimus*. The *princeps* is no philosopher king; were he truly wise, one imagines that there would be no orators at all – even the limited orators of the present. Maternus says as much: “What little our orators have left them of the old forensic activities goes to show that our civil condition is still far from being ideally perfect” (*Dial.* 41.1).

Certainly the present is not perfect or even particularly good in Maternus’ first speech, in which he praises poetry and criticizes the “gain-getting rhetoric ... greedy for human blood” that passes for contemporary oratory (*Dial.* 12.20). In his speech oratory is the product of a depraved social condition, an obstacle to peace and harmony; he prefers his poetic activities and the life of quiet solitude, though this, too, does not quite add up. After all, the dialogue only takes place because Maternus has written a play, *Cato*, that offended many powerful individuals, and in the dialogue he announces his plans to write another play sure to inflame: *Thyestes*.

Maternus' two speeches are at odds with each other. If the first mimics a Platonic indictment of eloquence and the second seems to endorse monarchy, together they are something altogether different. Bartsch describes the relationship between the different speeches thus: "It is precisely the inconsistencies that give rise to the problem of Maternus' sincerity in his final speech that also explain the *need* for the final speech at all" (Bartsch 1994, 114). Maternus' first speech could not have been his only speech for *prudential* reasons. That he gives a second and conciliatory speech at all indicates that he understands quite well the imprudence of his first speech. That he argues on opposite sides reflects a practice that is central to rhetoric: arguing *in utramque partem* (Cic., *Opt. Gen.* 20). Yet this also reflects a broader dilemma that Maternus addresses, one that affects the Roman striving for distinction in the public eye, which he describes thus: "Being constrained to curry favor in every direction, they can never show themselves either sufficiently servile to the powers that be, or sufficiently independent to us" (*Dial.* 13.4). One needed to navigate between dangerous extremes of behavior (see Pagán 2000), and the task required prudence, the faculty of reasoning effectively about particulars (Cicero, at *Off.* 1.153, translates *phronesis* as *prudentia*; on *phronesis* as reasoning about particulars, see Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1141b8–1142a30; see also 1141a8–23, 1142a23–30, and 1145a35).

The *Agricola*, recognized as a sort of companion piece to the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* (Mayer 2001, 2), explores the virtues and behaviors of Tacitus' father-in-law. *Agricola*, like Maternus' orator, needs to navigate extremes of behavior. In this regard he is quite successful, and the adjectives Tacitus uses illustrate this. *Agricola* is "neither casual ... nor indolent"; he seeks "nothing in bravado" and shuns "nothing in fear"; he possesses "caution and (is) yet eager." Tasked with supervising public games, "he kept a mean between thrift and lavishness" (Ag. 6.1, 6.4). Though he is moderate, *Agricola* is not quite the embodiment of Aristotelian moderation; his moderation is related to his prudence, a characteristic Tacitus attributes to him three times, a quality that is evident in his ability to adjust to his circumstances; he is "trained to habits of deference, and skillful in tempering duty with expediency" (prudent at Ag. 9.2, 19.1, and 42.3). His prudence is joined to his moderation, both of which help to mollify even Domitian, an emperor "unfriendly of high qualities" (Ag. 41.1). *Agricola* understands the world in which he lives: "He read (*gnarus*) aright the reign of Nero, wherein to be passive was to be wise" (Ag. 6.3). To understand the times in which one lives and to act in a fitting way: We are reminded of Maternus' admonition at the end of the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, "Since it is impossible for anybody to

enjoy at one and the same time great renown and great repose, let everyone make the most of the blessings his own times afford without disparaging any other age" (Ag. 41.5). Or, as Tacitus puts it – the so-called Golden Sentence – in reporting the words of Marcellus in *Histories* 4.8.2: "he admired the earlier period, but adapted himself to the present; he prayed for good emperors, but endured any sort."

Adaptation, prudence, understanding the present and especially the ruler: history itself can serve as a teacher. In this regard most, indeed, "are schooled (*docentur*) by the experience of others" (*Ann.* 4.33.2). This is especially true, we might imagine, when so many are ignorant of public affairs (*Hist.* 1.1). Regardless of how one learns one needs to understand the political order, be it "governed by the people, or by the nobility, or by individuals" (*Ann.* 4.33.1). Effective knowledge requires that one understand the dynamics of power:

In the period of alternate plebeian dominance and patrician ascendancy it was imperative, in one case, to study (*noscenda*) the character of the masses and the methods of controlling them; while, in the other, those who had acquired the most exact knowledge (*perdidicarent*) of the temper of the Senate and the aristocracy were accounted shrewd in their generation and wise; so today, when the situation has been transformed and the Roman world is little else than a monarchy, the collection and the chronicling of these details may yet serve an end: for few men distinguish (*discernunt*) right and wrong (*honesta ab deterioribus*), the expedient and the disastrous (*utilia ab noxiis*), by native intelligence (*prudentialia*); the majority are schooled by the experience of others.

(*Ann.* 4.33.2)

One must know (*noscenda*, *perdidicarent*) just as Agricola knew (*gnarus*). One must choose (*discernunt*) the *honestas* and *utilitas*. Few concepts are as central to Roman moral philosophy as these, the subject of Books 1 and 2 of Cicero's *De Officiis*, respectively. History – even a history of bad rulers – teaches. And those who read history rightly can, in turn, act prudently.

Reading the history of *principes* was a useful task. But what if the *princeps* was, in essence, illegible? We may contrast Agricola and Domitian on this point. Agricola was no dissembler: "his anger left no secret resentment behind it, and no man had cause to fear his silence: he thought it more honorable to hurt than to hate" (Ag. 22.4). Lacking the propensity to dissemble, he is quite different from Domitian, who reacted to news of Agricola's success "with affected pleasure and secret disquiet" (Ag. 39.1). The reason is obvious, as Domitian is insecure: "In his heart was the consciousness that his recent

counterfeit triumph over the Germans was a laughing stock” (39.1; cf. Suet., *Dom.* 6). His insecurity went so far that “the practice of public speaking and the glamour of the arts of peace had been silenced” (Ag. 39.1–2).

Domitian is a dissembler: Tiberius is the master. Soon after Tiberius ascends to the throne, it becomes clear that his coy behavior toward the Senate “had been assumed with the further object of gaining an insight into the feelings of the aristocracy: for all the while he was distorting words and looks into crimes and storing them in his memory” (*Ann.* 1.7.7). Almost by habit, it seems, Tiberius thinks one thing and says another, frequently acting on unrevealed thoughts with harmful consequences for those involved. His very diction was obscure, even if he did not wish “to conceal his thought” (*Ann.* 1.11.2). On assuming the office of *princeps*, he desired “to bury every trace of his sentiments,” and his way of speaking “became more intricate, uncertain, and equivocal than ever” (*Ann.* 1.11.2). Rome’s elite found themselves in a very strange situation; their greatest fear “was that they might seem to comprehend him” (*Ann.* 1.11.3).

On occasion the interplay between the dissembling Tiberius and the uncertain elites could be humorous. For example, before a vote Gnaeus Piso asked Tiberius the following question:

In what order will you register your opinion, Caesar? If first, I shall have something to follow: if last of all, I fear I may inadvertently find myself on the other side.

(*Ann.* 1.74.5; cf. *Hist.* 4.17)

Though it seems innocuous in this instance, it was not always so, and a “speaker ... had to walk a strait and slippery road under a prince who feared liberty and detested flattery” (*Ann.* 4.20). Elite Romans, faced with a dissembling emperor, were in a difficult situation, since his behavior was unpredictable and illegible, and hence arbitrary.

There may, of course, be good emperors, but being successful and acting prudently did not imply that particular emperors were in fact good: “great men can live even under bad rulers,” and “submission and moderation, if animation and energy go with them, reach the same pinnacle of fame, whither more often men have climbed by perilous courses but, with no profit to the state, have earned their glory by an ostentatious death” – this is, in part, the lesson of Agricola (42.4). What is it, though, that makes for a good – or bad – ruler? We see in Tacitus a number of antitheses between imperial virtues and vices, especially savagery (*saeuitia*) and mercy (*clementia*). If, by contrast, one lived in the reign of a sufficiently *clemens princeps*, one might be able to speak freely; with a *princeps* marked by *saeuitia* or

crudelitas, it was prudent to emulate Agricola to face the dilemmas of the *Dialogus de Oratoribus*.

Let us start with the qualities of the bad ruler in the earliest of Tacitus' writings: the *Agricola*. From the outset of the work, we see that Domitian's rule reversed the prior order of things. Whereas in the past it had been a custom to narrate great deeds, under Domitian, Tacitus tells us, "I had to seek permission which I should not have needed, had invective been my purpose; so harsh was the spirit of the age, so cynical towards virtue." One of Domitian's key vices is *saeuitia*, a trait that does not deal well with those who are "energetic" – *promptissimus* (Ag. 3.2). Given Domitian's vicious character, Tacitus describes his rule as "our former slavery," an era whose terror accentuated the "present blessings" of Trajan, who "is increasing daily the happiness of the times" (Ag. 3.1, 3).

Our first sustained portrait of the psychology of the bad ruler occurs after Agricola's defeat of a major British rebellion. Despite Agricola's modesty in victory, Domitian was displeased:

He greeted (the victories), as his manner was, with affected pleasure and secret disquiet: in his heart was the consciousness that his recent counterfeit triumph over the Germans was a laughing stock.

(Ag. 39.1; cf. Suet., Dom. 6)

Domitian was thus insecure and, because of his insecurity, a dissimulator.

Because Domitian is insecure, he suspects those whom he ought not to suspect; he is especially worried that Agricola will become more renowned than himself. It is for this reason that Tacitus ascribes a *political* purpose to Domitian's hostility toward letters: "It was all in vain that the practice of public speaking and the glamour of the arts of peace had been silenced, if another was to usurp military glory" (Ag. 39.2). Domitian's paranoia was fanned and nurtured by the informers, who accused Agricola of misdeeds many times. Of course Agricola was innocent of any wrongdoing; he was the victim of "an emperor unfriendly of high qualities: merely the glory of the man, and those worst of enemies, the people who praise you" (Ag. 41.1). Domitian was, in short, "a master who leaned ever to the worst side" (Ag. 41.4). His tools – or perhaps the tools used at his behest – to corrupt an individual like Agricola reflect the danger he posed to virtue: those who sought to dissuade Agricola from seeking a new province "extolled peace and quiet" – *quietem et otium laudare* – using as enticements the very things that marked the loss of British liberty (Ag. 42.1, 21.1).

Bad as Domitian was – marked by "a violent temper," and

“unrelenting in proportion to this secretiveness” – he was not impervious to Agricola’s qualities, chiefly his “moderation and discretion.” What Agricola lacked, however, was “truculence,” a “fatuous parade of independence,” both of which were sure “to invite renown and ruin” (Ag. 42.3).

What characterizes Domitian, then? Savagery – *saeuitia*; the tendency to engage in dissimulation, his concomitant insecurity; his fear of the virtuous and renowned, the fear he aroused in those who were renowned, and his susceptibility to having his suspicions stoked by sycophants through their flattery. (In this regard the portrait of Domitian shares much with Plato’s and Aristotle’s portraits of the tyrant; Plato, *Republic*, 562a4–569c8; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1313a34–1315b10.)

Tacitus’ portrayal of Tiberius is similar to his portrayal of Domitian. Tacitus’ Tiberius is a largely vicious individual (though he degenerates over time, especially as a result of Sejanus’ influence). He possesses many vices, but the one that is most apparent is his dissembling, a vice we have already encountered. Tacitus, as we can see, has little use for false appearances: we may note his distaste for Tiberius’ dissembling at the close of Book 1, where he describes “a servitude all the more detestable the more it was disguised under a semblance of liberty” (*Ann.* 1.81.2). Because he dissembles and feigns, Tiberius’ spirit was too complex and murky to be that of a citizen (*ciuilis animus*); Tiberius’ speech and behavior were different from what he thought and felt (*Ann.* 1.52.2).

Tacitus claims that Tiberius preferred savagery (*saeuitia*) to regret (*paenitentia*, *Ann.* 6.23.2). Once Agrippina had passed, Tacitus notes that “there was no abatement of cruelty” (*saeuitia*) in Tiberius’ rule (*Ann.* 6.25.1). Tiberius knew that being merciful would bring him fame (*fama clementiam sequeretur*), and so it was surprising that he chose instead a path that was sterner (*tristiora*, *Ann.* 4.31.2. Seneca, too, had argued that savagery does not bring rulers glory, while those who contain themselves do; Sen., *Clem.* 1.17.3). Not only did Tiberius prefer *saeuitia* to *clementia*; he was not amenable to others’ virtues. To take one example: Tiberius suspected (*suspectabat*) Lucius Arruntius because he was “rich, enterprising, greatly gifted, (and) correspondingly popular” (*Ann.* 1.13.1). Tiberius was not yet so vicious that he favored vice over virtue, but “the best he feared as a private danger, the worst as a public scandal” (*Ann.* 1.80.2). Tacitus’ savage Tiberius, then, is held up as a negative example, the object of rightful disapprobation, the living proof that such behavior brings no glory and, in the end, is self-defeating. Rulers ought to pursue the love of their subjects, not their fear, and to pursue virtue rather than vice (cf. Plin., *Pan.* 49.2–4).

If we see so much in the way of bad rulers in Tacitus, we might wonder if there are *good* rulers in Tacitus. The answer is yes, I suggest, but we see such rulers more in comparison to bad rulers than in sustained portraits. We could certainly list Agricola among the examples of good rulers in Tacitus' writings. So beloved was he by his troops in Britain that "rivalry for his compliments took the place of coercion" (*Ag.* 21.1). We find a similar dynamic in Germanicus' relationship to his troops in Germany: they felt a "debt of gratitude" to their leader for "his patience and his courtesy" in handling their mutiny (*Ann.* 2.13.1). With Agricola and Germanicus we see that leaders who are perceived to be virtuous by their subordinates might inspire their subordinates to voluntarily obey them, just as Trajan, the living embodiment of the censorship, inspired obedience and morality for Pliny (Plin., *Pan.* 45.5). Yet these portraits are not without ambiguity; Germanicus had a penchant for the histrionic: witness, for instance, his foolish effort to quell the mutiny in Germany by threatening to kill himself. "The act seemed brutal and ill conditioned," according to Tacitus, and one soldier even handed him his own sword, saying "it was sharper" (*Ann.* 1.35).

Tacitus' depiction of Vespasian is similar, as Vespasian succeeded in lessening Roman luxury despite the failure of previous emperors who had tried to curb it. Under his rule Tacitus suggests that "deference to the sovereign and the love of emulating him proved more powerful than legal sanctions and deterrents"; luxury declined correspondingly (*Ann.* 3.55). The reign of Vespasian – a ruler whose subjects loved to emulate him – was quite different from the reigns of many of his predecessors, during which "virtues caused the surest ruin" as a result of the interplay between informers and insecure *principes* (*Hist.* 1.2). This should not be surprising, given, for instance, Tacitus' description of Otho and Vitellius' characters: these "two men, the worst in the world for their shamelessness, indolence, and profligacy, had been apparently chosen by fate to ruin the empire" (*Hist.* 1.50).

4. Conclusion

The reading of Tacitus that I have developed centers on the role of prudence in his thought, the educative function of writing, and the nature – and recognizing the nature – of good and bad rule. To return to Burke's terminology, this is a "pink" Tacitus – neither the revolutionary-republican red, nor the Machiavellian-realist black. My reading of Tacitus seeks to eschew extremes, just as I read Tacitus as

himself seeking to eschew extremes. Whether we ought to read Tacitus as endorsing monarchy or republic, while not unfruitful, strikes me as pushing him in a direction that he seeks to avoid. The principate was the reality of Rome; while it brought with it the potential for abuses, it also had the potential to be better. The Republic was long dead, and there was no going back; nor was there much sense in idealizing it through a nostalgic gaze – it, too, had its problems. Either way, the elite Roman needed to find how to act and to do so prudently. Tacitus' project, then, is neither revolutionary nor reactionary, but centers on the cultivation of prudence and learning to navigate the murky and dangerous waters of a political world that is neither wholly free nor wholly servile.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For a general overview of Roman political thought, Morford (2002) is quite useful, as is Brunt (1988). Older, though still useful, are Earl (1967) and Wirszubski (1950). Syme (1958) remains an excellent source for approaching Tacitus' writings and their context, and Syme (1970) is a good overview of Tacitus' thought. Additional sources on Tacitus' thought in the context of the principate include Bartsch (1994) and Kraus (2000). Similarly useful for situating Tacitus are Keitel (1984), Ahl (1984), Pagán (2000), Rutledge (2007), and Wallace-Hadrill (1982). Studies of particular aspects of Tacitus' political thought include Boesche (1987), Fontana (1993), chapter 4 of Hammer (2008), Kapust (2009), chapters 5 and 6 of Kapust (2011), and Saxonhouse (1975). Finally, Burke (1969) is a key source on Tacitus' role in the history of political thought, as are Schellhase (1976) and Tenney (1941).

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AND OTHER WRITERS: and Cicero; and Germanicus; and Juvenal; and Livy; and Pliny the Younger; and Sallust; and Seneca; and Silius Italicus

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Wretched of the Earth, The (Fanon)
Writing and Empire in Tacitus (Sailor)
Xenophon
Xiphilinus
youth
Youth Games, Nero’s
Zama
Zimmermann, Maximilian
zone of zero interpretability